The Nation.

April 1, 1991 $1.75 U.S./$2.25 Canada

APR 3

Pagan Kennedy
LESS THAN 'PSYCHO'
See Page 426

EDITORIAL

WHAT'S IN THE *DAILY NEWS*?

The prospect of Robert Maxwell as the new owner of the New York *Daily News* reminds us of Harry Golden's quip about Barry Goldwater, who had a Jewish father and a Protestant mother: "I always knew that the first Jewish President would be an Episcopalian." It's no surprise that the only socialist publisher of a major U.S. daily in the 1990s turns out to be a multinational media baron.

Actually, Maxwell is a mild socialist. And he deserves credit for bargaining with the *News*'s nine unions, unlike the paper's present owner, the Chicago Tribune Company, which was bent on busting them. The unions salvaged their continuing presence at the bargaining table along with 1,800 jobs—a loss of 800 from the *News*'s pre-strike level. Such were Maxwell's conditions for taking the money-losing property off the Trib Company's hands (its stock rose on the news). If he can make it here, New York will remain a four-paper town, at least for now.

The Czechoslovakia-born conglomerator thinks he can make it anywhere, but in interviews last week he sounded like a pukka sahib highhandedly mangling the native lingo. He quoted "Yogi Bear's" famous line, "A thing is not done until it is done," and described union leaders as "Runyonesque—straight out of *West Side Story*." Being Irish, "they have a great sense of humor."

Well, people in this international city, with its 57 percent minorities, are used to cultural imperialism, having lost the Dodgers to L.A. (it *still* hurts) and Radio City to the Japanese. But lissen, Maxwell, in Noo Yawk we tawk different, see? We don't wanna be treated like anudda colony in yuh media empire, unnastan' what we're sayin'?

The great Irish writer O'Henry wrote about "The Four Million." A TV show said there were 8 million stories in Nude City. Get 'em right, Maxie.

A.W. SINGHAM

SADDAM DRESSED DOWN
Alexander Cockburn

THE MEXICAN BORDER WARS
Miriam Davidson

MURDERS IN AMAZONIA
Ken Silverstein

TALES OF TWO CITIES
Marshall Berman
JoAnn Wypijewski

ODD MAN IN

WELLSTONE—SENATOR FROM THE LEFT?

DAVID CORN

The desk is cluttered. Next to a folder emblazoned with the insignia of the Central Intelligence Agency and containing briefing material on the Persian Gulf war rests a dogeared copy of *Tikkun*, a magazine written mostly by and for Jewish-American leftists. Behind the mess the freshman Senator from Minnesota is on the phone talking to a Representative from his home state about a regulatory matter concerning a company based there. He hangs up and resumes a conversation about people in Washington he is eager to meet. The first name on his list is Robert Greenstein of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, a research group that studies the impact of government policies on low-income Americans. "I've contributed to the organization for years," he says excitedly. That's not surprising. Until recently, this lawmaker was a rabble-rousing Carleton College professor and community organizer. Now Senator Paul Wellstone is trying to find a niche—but not too comfortable a place—in the most exclusive political club in the land.

Wellstone's background is very politically correct. At Carleton in the late 1960s, he was a hip political science professor who sported a bushy Afro and told his classes that studying theory was not enough; they had to learn politics and organizing in the field. (He had written his dissertation on "Black Militants in the Ghetto: Why They Believe in Violence.") Wellstone and his students helped create an organization

(*Cont. on p. 412*)

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LETTERS.

NIGHTMARE

Tempe, Ariz.

I assure Jamin B. Raskin and your readers that I was not dreaming when I, an American by birth, of German descent, was interned at Ellis Island and in Crystal City, Texas, where I sat with my Japanese-American counterparts ["Remember *Korematsu*: A Precedent for Arab-Americans?" Feb. 4]. Thousands of European-Americans were interned in the United States. The 11,229 Japanese-Americans interned are eligible for the reparations checks Raskin cited. The 14,426 European-Americans who were interned, however, are ineligible for reparations. Therefore, a civil case in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, filed March 8, 1989, argues that the reparations law is unconstitutional because it discriminates based upon national origin.

Arthur D. Jacobs
Major, U.S.A.F. (Retired)

YEARS OF WAITING

Palatine, Ill.

Professor Raskin, like many others, is sadly misinformed that Germans and Italians were not interned during World War II. At the age of 17, I was arrested in my high school in Cincinnati, sent to a detention station in Chicago, then on to Crystal City, Texas, where I first met the Japanese. Two years following the war, in August 1947, I was released from Ellis Island. The Japanese were freed on V-J Day. That Raskin is not aware of the extent of German-American suffering during this period attests to the effectiveness of the F.B.I.'s program to intimidate and control the German-American population through "interviews," which were often followed by internment.

Eberhard Fuhr

'REAL MILITARY DANGERS'

Miami

Professor Raskin presents some convoluted thinking about the implications of the 1944 Supreme Court decision in *Korematsu v. United States*, and he resorts to false charges of racism to support a position that is indefensible. Surely the professor could not have been around at the time. He confuses race with national origin and indiscriminately bestows hyphenated citizenship upon alien and citizen alike. He misunderstands the legal meaning of the word *internment* in time of war and incorrectly claims that the World War II executive order to evacuate and relocate enemy aliens from designated war zones was unconstitutional.

Raskin's statement that German-Americans and Italian-Americans were not interned as groups is simply untrue. According to Immigration and Naturalization Service records, of the 25,655 enemy aliens interned, 55 percent were Germans and Italians, who, with their American families, were in the same camps as the Japanese. Raskin also misrepresents the citizenship status of those of Japanese descent who were affected by the evacuation/relocation order. Of the 112,000 Japanese *relocated* (not interned) by the War Relocation Authority, 62,000 were adults and 50,000 were their children. Of the 62,000 adults, 41,000 were Japanese nationals and 21,000 were American-born Japanese who also held Japanese citizenship.

Quoting portions of *Korematsu*, Raskin ignores the words of Justice Hugo Black, who wrote for the majority: "To cast this case into outlines of racial prejudice, without reference to the real military dangers which were presented, merely confuses the issue. Korematsu was not excluded from the Military Area because of hostility to him or his race . . . [but] because we are at war with the Japanese Empire." *William J. Hopwood*
Commander, U.S.N.R. (Retired)

RASKIN REPLIES

Washington

My correspondents correctly point out that individual Germans and German-Americans were interned during World War II. I never denied that fact. I noted only that German-Americans and Italian-Americans were not systematically interned as *groups* in the way Japanese-Americans were. While many German-Americans were treated harshly and without due process, as a group they suffered nothing like the wholesale evacuation, exclusion and long-term incarceration of Japanese-Americans living on the West Coast. The wartime experiences of Arthur Jacobs, a German-American, and Eberhard Fuhr, apparently a German alien at the time, presumably underscore the perils of guilt by stereotype. But Commander Hopwood has a different agenda. By calling Japanese-Americans, who are every bit as much citizens of this country as he is, "American-born Japanese who also held Japanese citizenship" and implausibly comparing their mass incarceration to the mistreatment of individual enemy aliens, Hopwood means to deny the unique role of racism in their roundup and to diminish the importance of their suffering.

The 1982 report of Congress's Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians devotes a chapter to the experience of Germans and German-Americans. Despite "devastating" naval warfare by the Nazis along the East Coast, this "destructive struggle, with its suggestions of active aid from people on shore, produced no mass exclusion of German aliens or German American citizens from the East Coast." Rather, the Justice Department "interned East Coast German aliens it thought dangerous, and a small number of German American citizens were individually excluded from coastal areas after review of their personal records." This "individualized approach to determining loyalty was followed despite visible, active pro-Nazi operations among German Americans before the outbreak of the war," such as the famous pro-Hitler rally organized by the German Bund at Madison Square Garden, which attracted 20,000 people on February 20, 1939. Even for those German aliens unfairly targeted, "internment differed markedly from the exclusion program on the West Coast." After prompt hearings "release was very likely despite the government's great advantages in the hearing process." (Italians and Italian-Americans largely, though not entirely, escaped victimization since President Roosevelt, who regarded them as "a lot of opera singers," approved Attorney General Francis Biddle's 1942 decision to leave them alone.) Moreover, as a matter of racial policy, the "East Coast orders differ from the Japanese exclusion program because they did not discriminate against American citizens on the basis of ethnicity or parentage."

The report emphasizes "the far more severe treatment which Japanese Americans as a group received at official hands." Driven by anti-Japanese racism, the government issued more than 100 exclusion orders commanding Japanese-Americans specifically, in groups of 1,000, to dispose of their belongings and appear at assembly centers within a week. They were then transported to government relocation centers, where 112,000 people would spend on average 900 days each in frightful conditions behind barbed wire. And the commission concludes, "We unleashed summary sanctions upon a small ethnic group on a scale unknown in our history."

Hopwood's quaint apology for the majority's decision in *Korematsu* recalls the point of my article: that there are many people in the precincts of state power willing to defend the constitutionality of racial classification and exclusion. All the more reason to stop massive violations of civil liberties before they begin. *Jamin B. Raskin*

HIS FINE HAND

Chicago

I read with interest Alexander Cockburn's homage to the big girl who used to muck out his mother's stables ["Beat the Devil," Jan. 21]. I had the same reaction to Mr. Cockburn himself when he spoke at the University of Chicago a couple of years ago. After his lecture a group of us invited him out to a local dive for pizza and beer. We all crowded into a large booth, and through some unobtrusive maneuvering I was able to seat myself at his immediate left, after which I spent the next hour staring at his hands. I have a vivid memory of these, but I was in such a haze of genteel lust that I cannot remember a word he said. Alas, I fear he will not remember me at all: I am some years past girlhood, middle-sized and was wielding nothing but a salad fork. *Suzanne Erfurth*

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Manuscripts: The magazine cannot be responsible for the return of unsolicited manuscripts unless accompanied by addressed, stamped envelopes.

Publisher, Arthur L. Carter

President, David Parker; *Associate Publisher and General Manager*, Neil Black; *Associate Publisher and Advertising Director*, Chris Calhoun; *Advertising Sales Representative*, Caerthan Banks; *Classified Advertising Director*, Gary Pomerantz; *Business Manager*, Ann B. Epstein; *Bookkeepers*, Ivor A. Richardson, Shirleathia Watson; *Art/Production Manager*, Jane Sharples; *Vice President and Circulation Director*, Margaret Pyle; *Subscription Manager*, Cookee V. Klein; *Circulation Coordinator*, Jacqueline Lucas; *Receptionists*, Greta Loell, Vivette Dhanukdhari; *Data Entry and Mail Coordinator*, John Holtz; *Administrative Secretary*, Shirley Sulat; *Typography*, Sandy McCroskey; *Nation Associates*: *Assistant Director*, Carlos Durazo; Peter Rothberg, Peter Siskind; *Permissions and Back Issues*, Josh Neufeld; *Publicity and Special Projects Director*, Peter G. Meyer.

The Nation (ISSN 0027-8378) is published weekly (except for the first week in January, and biweekly in July and August) by The Nation Company, Inc.

© 1991 in the U.S.A. by The Nation Company, Inc.,
72 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10011. (212) 242-8400. *Washington Bureau:* Suite 308, 110 Maryland Avenue N.E., Washington, DC 20002. (202) 546-2239. Second-class postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. International Telex: 667 155 NATION. Subscription orders, changes of address and all subscription inquiries: *The Nation*, P.O. Box 10763, Des Moines IA 50340-0763. *Subscription Price*: 1 year, $44; 2 years, $75. Add $18 for surface mail postage outside U.S. Missed issues must be claimed within 60 days (120 days foreign) of publication date. **Please allow 4-6 weeks for receipt of your first issue and for all subscription transactions.** Back issues $3 prepaid ($4 foreign) from: *The Nation*, 72 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10011. *The Nation* is available on microfilm from: University Microfilms, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *The Nation*, P.O. Box 10763, Des Moines IA 50340-0763. This issue went to press on March 14.

EDITORIALS.

Black and Blue

L.A. law is a law unto itself. Its police chief—since 1971, Daryl F. Gates—is barely answerable to political authority and wears a full metal jacket of civil service protection against dismissal for policy reasons. Gates could be heavily represented in a *Bartlett's* of racial insults and political put-downs. He once justified the use of the deadly choke-hold technique on blacks as an experiment to determine if such victims had the same respiratory systems as "normal people." He has ignored developments in modern community-policing methods and has invested heavily in the exquisite technology of excessive violence performed in paramilitary style and specializing in search and destroy missions in the ghettos.

Chief Gates suffered a setback of sorts in early March, when a scene of unrestrained brutality by his lawmen was videotaped by a citizen perched on a nearby balcony. (L.A. is nothing if not media-ready.) The cops pulled an unarmed black "suspect" from his car and, as he pleaded for mercy, struck him with nightsticks more than fifty times, broke his leg, kicked him senseless and caused serious, possibly permanent, injury.

Gates is calling it an aberration; of course it's anything but. And although such incidents of police terror are perhaps more common in Los Angeles, they are hardly unknown anywhere in America. In rare cases, justice is attempted, if not done—

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usually in the form of a trial or the dismissal of an officer—as a sop to an inflamed, riotous community. Most often, the thin blue line solidifies against a despised minority population, with the approval of the majority.

It is hard enough to reform the police on a city-by-city basis. But now the Bush Administration has weighed in with a so-called crime bill that expresses contempt for those who would attack the causes of crime and instead opts for the military solutions: more executions, more prisons, more hardware. What that will bring, if anything, is more crime.

A.W. Singham

When Lionel Hurst, the U.N. ambassador from Antigua and Barbuda, heard that A.W. (Archie) Singham had died, on March 12 at the age of 58, his first words were, "It's a sad day for the Caribbean." The ambassador, like a host of other Caribbean diplomats, had studied political science with Professor Singham, whose deep interest in the region was reflected in his academic career. He taught for ten years at the University of the West Indies and subsequently introduced Caribbean studies programs at Howard University and at Brooklyn College. He wrote the definitive book on Grenada's charismatic authority system, *The Hero and the Crowd in a Colonial Polity*. He was a confidant of many leaders in the region, including Michael Manley, Prime Minister of Jamaica, and Cheddi Jagan, former Prime Minister of British Guiana, both of whom he lured to our offices for lively seminars. The one with Jagan was attended by Arthur Schlesinger Jr. and resulted in a news-making revelation of the Kennedy Administration's role in undermining Jagan's regime in 1964 [see "Tale of Two Books," June 4, 1990].

It was also a sad day for *The Nation*. Archie, our friend and editorial board colleague, was as wise as he was informed, as articulate as he was impassioned, as hilarious as he was serious. Like Ambassador Hurst, we too "studied" political science with Archie, and also cultural anthropology, racism and the role of nonaligned countries in an aligned world (a subject on which he co-wrote a book with his wife, Shirley Hune). So did Walter Rodney, author of *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, the classic dependency-theory study of Africa; Bala Muhammed, the Dean of Social Sciences at Kaduna University in Nigeria; and Representative Mike Espy of Mississippi, to name only a handful.

Having nurtured more than his share of U.N. ambassadors, it was only natural that Archie himself had a kind of ambassadorial relationship to the world organization, serving on its committees, kibitzing with its delegates and promoting its potential among his various constituencies. He also served as *The Nation*'s self-appointed ambassador to the U.N., pressing the latest issue of the magazine (which might include an unsigned editorial on how the Gang of Five was corrupting the Security Council, written by guess who) on the nearest dignitary in the delegates' lounge.

It is fitting that this scholar of charisma should have had so much of it himself. It is terribly sad and an irreplaceable loss that he is no longer here to hector, incite and inspire us.

FAREWELL, PARKER

Since 1982, when David Parker joined this magazine as associate publisher, he has played a vital and creative role in its business operations. In 1987, David assumed the post of president and brought to the job a high degree of energy. During his time here, the magazine's circulation more than doubled, the business and circulation staffs expanded, the office was renovated, computerization introduced and the revenues of the magazine tripled. At *The Nation* David's humor and humanity are valued as much as his business acumen. So it's with personal regret that we announce that he is leaving us to divide his time between lecturing on the alternative media at the University of California at Santa Cruz and developing special projects at a magazine consulting firm. His friends here wish him many seasons of success.

Saddam Boosters

Amman

Saddam Hussein might be a disgrace in his own country, but he could probably win election here in neighboring Jordan. In this Hashemite Kingdom a Palestinian majority and a Bedouin minority remain virulently, sometimes violently, outspoken in their support of the only leader who has ever had the guts to wage full-scale war on their behalf against the Americans and their friends.

Even when it was plain to the rest of the world that Saddam was losing, he remained an almost mythic figure here. Postcard-sized montage photographs showing Saddam wrestling President Bush, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and other hated infidels into submission are still sold on street corners. The fact that Saddam dropped the Palestinian cause as a bargaining chip during his dialogue with Moscow appears irrelevant in the festering Palestinian "refugee" camps, still without sewage systems a generation after the flight from Israel. He joins a pantheon of "heroes" like Arafat whose value for Palestinians has been more rhetorical than real.

The greatest danger here is that Palestinians, and Bedouins—nomads still restive under Jordanian control even when they have settled into towns and villages—may rally around the figure of Saddam in a show of force against the Hashemite rule of King Hussein. It was to demonstrate that he was really on their side, and to divert the rage of Palestinians and Bedouins, that the King cast his lot with Saddam in the first place. Now he must order his secret police—hardly terrorists on the order of their brethren in any of Jordan's Arab neighbors, Iraq, Syria and Saudi Arabia—to ferret out signs of Palestinian dissidence. He must walk as perilous a tightrope as any other beleaguered Third World leader, seeming to encourage Palestinian illusions and fantasies while slyly slipping back

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into the good graces of his onetime Saudi benefactors, not to mention the United States. It is the kind of game in which the King, after a lifetime of alternately placating and cracking down on Palestinians while surviving three wars with Israel, is especially adept. Small wonder, then, that the local media, state-controlled if not state-owned, avoid spelling out the dimensions of the Iraqi debacle in Kuwait, much less illuminating it in hideous detail as probably the bloodiest defeat in history for an Arab army.

Small wonder, too, that Palestinians prefer to view what happened in Kuwait and southern Iraq as "a great victory"—for their cause if not for Iraq. The logic of that may elude Western observers but is simple to Palestinians: Saddam placed the Palestinian issue near the top of his agenda, demanding a peace conference including Palestinian nationhood and the West Bank situation as a condition for talks on Kuwait. No other non-Palestinian Arab has appeared willing to risk so much for Palestinian rights. No other has elevated the Palestinian question to such a dizzy level of international double-daring. Now, so this exercise in wishful thinking goes, President Bush and his cohorts will have to listen. "Everybody knows about us now," says a businessman in a posh new office downtown. "The world knows we have friends." Implicit in his tone is a belief that Saddam may rise again; that his "withdrawal" from Kuwait was just that, not a pell-mell retreat; that he will resume the fight once the Americans and the British, like the crusaders of centuries past, have at last abandoned their castles in the desert sands.

Palestinians—and Bedouins—back up that outlook with threats that sometimes surprise foreign visitors prepared for angry interviews but not for violence. The sense of fury radiates from the downtown souks to camps and settlements where pent-up rage simmers beneath placid surfaces. "Get out of here," a Palestinian riding a tractor shouts at me and my companion as we stop to ask directions at Bakaa, a Palestinian camp a few miles from downtown Amman. "I will kill you." Another Palestinian asks for an identification paper from the government—then tears it up. "You are Jewish spies," he says. "All journalists are spies." His views come straight from the local press, free to print whatever it wants in that vein as long as it does not question the authority of the King.

A Palestinian activist is full of success stories about the devastation inflicted on Israel by Scud missiles. He cites the local Palestinian papers as his source. There are still reports about "hundreds" of Israeli homes "destroyed," about the bodies of "more than 100" American soldiers photographed on the scene, about Iraqi soldiers standing up against thirty nations at once. There is no debating with him, no doubting the accuracy of the reports. "Your media says one thing, ours says another," he retorts. Even the BBC, once respected here for its accuracy and objectivity, now represents one of the "enemy" nations.

A couple of days into the allied ground offensive I stop at the town of Safawi, halfway on the three-hour drive from Amman to the Iraqi frontier. It is a Bedouin community—its inhabitants the children of the nomads who settled down after seeing the money to be made from servicing trucks on their way to and from Iraq. A store manager grins happily, but his hospitality wears off quickly. "If an American pilot falls down here, we will kill him," he says. "Saddam kills all Americans in the gulf." He seems uncertain about whether to vent his wrath on me or to show me the fragments of a U.S. bomb that fell near his brother's truck inside Iraq.

"I see Bedouin with their sheep in the desert attacked by planes," says the brother as we inspect the shrapnel. "I hope from God maybe Iraq will attack all Americans." Pictures of Saddam and Arafat are visible inside shops and homes—even though neither has championed the Bedouins.

With the defeat of the Iraqis, the heroes live on in local mythology. There is no talk, seemingly little thought, of new ones to replace those who would appear by any rational standards to have failed miserably. The heroes themselves may die or flee or fade but their dream endures—inspiration always for another round of talking or fighting or rebelling or whatever it takes for Palestinians to return to a homeland that many of them have never seen.

"We have won a great victory," says the downtown businessman. "We will win again." Under the circumstances, argument seems pointless. DONALD KIRK

Donald Kirk, a freelance journalist, has spent the past two months in Iraq, Syria, Turkey and Jordan.

★

SUGGESTED CHEERS FOR THE BROADWAY TICKER-TAPE VICTORY PARADE

Who's
The only four-star general we've got
Who tries to be a modern Lancelot,
Although he looks a lot like Willard Scott?
Yeaaaaa, Norm! Big as a dorm! Rah, rah!

Who's
The guy who made us gladder by the hour
That those in charge of judging John G. Tower
Had sent the little fellow to the shower?
Yeaaaaa, Cheney! Rarely zany! Rah, rah!

Who's
The first pol at the Saudi aerodrome,
The first to wish Israeli friends shalom—
Distracting from the crooked stuff at home?
Yeaaaaa, D'Amato! Sleazeball obbligato! Rah, rah!

Calvin Trillin

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BEAT THE DEVIL.

Where Is Saddam Now That They Need Him?

"The American army allowed the Republican Guard to pass down the road to Basra to attack our fighters there. Why did they do that?" Such was the question, quoted by Robert Fisk in *The Independent*, put by one of the Iraqi delegates at the conference of anti-Saddam groups in Beirut on March 12. The delegate surely knew the answer even before he asked the question. The U.S. government has no interest in a Shiite capture of power in Iraq, nor in a democratic coalition of Shiites, Kurds, Iraqi Communists and other secular left elements. It has evinced profound antipathy to the Iraqi opposition in exile. The Kurdish leader Jalal Talabani visited Washington recently but was denied an audience at the State Department. Hoshyar Zebari, European representative of the Kurdistan Democratic Party, was similarly kept at arm's length.

None of this should surprise anyone, though it discomfits liberal supporters of the war who thought it seemly to present the conflict as a war of liberation, not only of Kuwait but of Iraq. Prominent among those has been Fred Halliday, a sometime contributor to these pages and a man who, at least in the years before he obtained a chair in international relations at the London School of Economics, was reckoned as having a left outlook on world affairs. Halliday was one of the bellwether intellectuals who, in company with Hans-Magnus Enzensberger, Michael Lerner, Michael Ignatieff and—afforded his usual slot on the *New York Times* Op-Ed page to cheer on the B-52s as a man of the left*—Paul Berman, issued their O.K. for the bombs to fall.

On February 11, after the United States had been bombing Iraq for twenty-five days, Halliday announced in a column in *The Guardian* of London that sanctions would never have worked and that arguments for the war had indeed justly carried the day. I reproached him for this posture in the *New Statesman*, pointing out that it was disingenuous to say that the sanctions (which he had previously affected to support) had failed, since no one had ever claimed that they could succeed in so short a time. I also cited the various Iraqi overtures rejected by the United States, and asked by what conceivable measure was it justifiable to kill thousands of Iraqi civilians. (That was before Bush postponed acceptance of a ceasefire until tens of thousands of fleeing soldiers, refugees and Kuwaiti hostages could be incinerated along the roads north from Kuwait.)

Halliday's response, published in the *New Statesman* for March 8, was revealing. He commenced with undignified whining about "sectarian papers shouting abuse in shopping arcades." Some vendor had apparently cried "sellout" at Halliday, an attack that the great man felt far more keenly than the matter of Iraqi dead, which he does not mention at all. Then he got down to business: "The option chosen by the majority of the left was a monumental political blunder, a failure of political, moral and historical sense that bears comparison with the disastrous mistakes of the 1930s." When in doubt, up the ante.

Halliday never spells out this "option," this "blunder," because if he did so, the accusation would swiftly be dismissed as absurd. His innuendo is that the "majority of the left" was soft on Saddam, indifferent to the occupation of Kuwait, averse to addressing the matter of "legitimate force" and prey to a "fake 'anti-imperialism.' "

None of this is true. The "majority of the left" regarded Saddam, as it always had, with hostility, urged Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait, considered sanctions an appropriate expression of force in prompting Iraq to withdraw and was far more coherent in its analysis of imperialism than Halliday.

Halliday has argued that this was a war of liberation, to evict Saddam and his apparatus from Iraq, the implication being that in this just cause Iraq's civilians and the press-ganged privates in its army had necessarily to die. Scarcely a single Iraqi exile joined Halliday in such approval of the bombing of Iraq and the devastation of its infrastructure. They continued to urge the route of sanctions.

In a truly revolting paragraph in the *Statesman*, Halliday claims that "the resistance that Iraq put up in the five weeks of the war" led him to conclude that sanctions could never have worked. As we have seen, Halliday's posture on sanctions is purely self-serving. And what was this "resistance"? Is Halliday alluding here to the pathetic calls for vengeance from Iraqi fathers as they pulled the bodies of their wives and children from the Amiriya air-raid shelter? Halliday claims that Saddam was never seriously interested in negotiations. How could Halliday or the U.S. government know this? No effort was made to explore the offers. The price of not finding out was at least 100,000 lives.

The Iraqi exiles had longer memories and a clearer appreciation of U.S. intentions than Halliday, who, amid that final bloodletting on the roads north from Kuwait, was confiding hopefully to NPR's *Morning Edition* for February 28 that "the only way to destroy, definitely, the Baathist system was to drive on to Baghdad and destroy it as Nazi Germany was destroyed." A few moments later in the same interview he added, "I think that the United States, which has encouraged democracy in some other parts of the world, are—has had a curious blind spot as far as the Middle East is concerned, partly because of oil, partly because they think it's just not worth the trouble, and this may well carry over into the postwar phase."

Encourage democracy? Curious blind spot? He should look back at his own *Arabia Without Sultans*, written before he was ensconced in his chair at the L.S.E. and started fielding calls from NPR, in which he states that as of 1974 in the Middle East the United States had "been involved and fighting for oil for the past fifteen years—by proxy, in a campaign more covert and strategically more important than any war in Indochina or Latin America."

Presumably, Halliday is now scratching his head in wonderment that the U.S. forces are not pushing on to Baghdad

*For more on the role of self-advertising "leftists" in burnishing the imperial chariot, see Von Puffendorf's magisterial survey.

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ALEXANDER COCKBURN

but rather are permitting the Republican Guard to drive against the insurgents threatening Saddam and his Baath apparatus. Meanwhile, back in Kuwait U.S. contractors make their deals as Kuwaiti torturers seize the electrodes left by their Iraqi opposite numbers and apply them to Palestinians, Sudanese and other objects of their fury. Martial law remains and unwanted elements are mowed down, under the overall supervision of U.S. Special Forces.

To quote Fisk once again, from *The Independent* for March 4: "When three Kuwaiti soldiers began to beat up a Palestinian boy on a bicycle in Hwali yesterday Colin Smith of the *Observer* and I intervened, physically restraining the Kuwaiti troops and ordering them to lower their weapons. Several of the Kuwaiti armoured vehicles were flying American flags. But the Special Forces troops accompanying the Kuwaitis did nothing to help. When I asked the American officer why he allowed the Kuwaitis to beat civilians, he replied, 'You having a nice day? We don't want your sort around here with your dirty rumors. You have a big mouth. This is martial law, boy. Fuck off.' " These Special Forces have no names on their uniforms, but small Kuwaiti flags are sewn on. Support the troops, as the Hausfraus used to say.

The Beast Within the Beast

The U.S. tabloid *National Examiner* ran a composite photograph of Saddam as a drag queen in its March 12 edition. This is the traditional *coup de grâce* for foreign devils. The *Examiner*'s Saddam lacked the finesse of the *New York Post*'s composite of Qaddafi in women's clothes, published after the bombing raid on Tripoli in 1986. Qaddafi is a natural exhibitionist, so the *Post*'s artist must have felt he was truly holding the mirror up to nature and took some pains to get Muammar nicely turned out. Saddam, in the *Examiner* version, is very campy, with hand on hip and a "George, you bitch!" tilt to his chin.

"Brenda D.," one of the *Examiner*'s informants, reports that Saddam has physical limitations that probably account for his warped personality. Brenda describes her eager anticipation in his bunker boudoir (she used to work for an American oil-exporting company in Baghdad): "But then he took off his clothes and I couldn't help laughing. 'Well, Saddam,' I muttered to myself, 'I can see you're never going to be a candidate for the centerfold of *Playgirl*.' "

Another source cited by the *Examiner* is "a former valet," who "says that Saddam also has a homosexual fixation for young men." " 'For his gay encounters, he'd dress in costumes of great women of history,' says Ahmed Al-Hafr, now an exile in Jordan. 'With his flabby masculine build, he looked ridiculous. But he thought he looked sexy dolled up as Cleopatra, Catherine the Great or Jezebel.' " Who was this "Ahmed"? Probably Jeeves on furlough, after a row with Bertie Wooster about spats.

Enter Saddam, magnificent as Catherine the Great:

"Well, Jeeves, how do I look?"

"The dress perhaps a trifle lower, Sir. And might I suggest pearls rather than emeralds."

Saddam embraces Jeeves, giving him a smacking kiss.

"Thank you, Jeeves. Collar those dinars on the dressing table when you leave."

"Thank you, Sir."

Jeeves/Ahmed told the *Examiner* that " 'oddly, for a man who could be viciously cruel, he preferred the submissive role in homosexual encounters.' " There you go: beast, mass murderer but, above all, faggot.

O Brave New World

"The greatest weakness of the Polish press is the conviction of most journalists that their job is not merely to report the news, but to shape it with opinion and to advance a particular political line."

This is from "Emerging Voices: East European Media in Transition," a report prepared by Everette Dennis and Jon Vanden Heuvel, with the assistance of Jeremy King, for the Gannett Foundation. The report cites Kazimierz Woycicki, the editor of *Zycie Warzawy*, whose journalists "see themselves as commentators and essayists; they regard it as beneath their intellectual capacities merely to write concise news stories, and want to be individualistic in their views on political issues. They want to be left alone in their private offices to ponder the crucial matters of the day—not to be engaged in the collaborative editorial page style such as that used by American newspapers." In other words, they shun serfdom.

"Woycicki said that this conception of journalism is so ingrained in the older journalists that it is probably useless to try to retrain them in new journalistic approaches. Instead, efforts would probably be spent best training a younger, new generation of journalists."

This business of getting rid of the older crowd is borne in on me every time I visit a newsroom. There are very few old people around, particularly in television. Publishers and owners don't like old people, who can remember things, like what really happened the day before yesterday. The younger journalists scurry about or hunch before their computer terminals, hair brushed forward over their temples to conceal the scars where their brains were cut out.

The report notes that Polish journalists "generally held journalism schools in low regard," thinking it "better to have individuals trained in other fields like history, law or philosophy than to have them trained specifically as journalists." They thought the journalism school in Warsaw produced only Communist Party hacks, and that such schools "actually became a place to sort out the ideologically impure and prevent them from practicing journalism." This is an adequate description of the function of journalism schools in the United States.

Asked to criticize the U.S. press, eighteen Eastern European journalists at a conference in Prague in July 1990 noted superficiality, over-commercialization of news and "a self-imposed primitiveness." Abe Rosenthal primitive?

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BELTWAY BANDITS.

DAVID CORN

■ Don't Follow Leaders

The war is over, and as Bush basks, the Democrats in Congress shuffle their feet and once in a while, when a moment of courage strikes, squeak "What about domestic policy?" There is nothing more domestic than the savings and loan bailout, for which taxpayers are being socked with a twelve- or thirteen-digit bill. Yet on this subject the Democratic leadership outdoes itself in meekness. Days after the war ended, the House Banking Committee began consideration of a bill authorizing the Resolution Trust Corporation, which oversees the S&L cleanup, to borrow $30 billion for fiscal 1991. Recall that the bailout—designed by Bush and accepted by Congress—is financed by long-term borrowing and kept off the budget. At the committee meeting Representative Joseph Kennedy 2d, one of the few legislators to grasp that the S&L disaster could be a winning populist issue for Democrats, offered an amendment to transform the bailout into a pay-as-you-go program. In other words, the White House and Congress would have had to come up with funds now.

That was a line in the sand. Either taxes would have had to be hiked or programs cut. A pay-now scheme would, according to the Congressional Budget Office, save up to $169 billion in interest costs. It would also force the political issue. Bush would have to propose how the money would be raised to rectify the S&L scandal. Would the most popular President since Harry Truman tax the middle class? Perhaps cut Medicare? Anything along those lines would be ammo for the Democrats. As is, the bailout imposes a hidden tax that hits working people hard. For the past two years, Kennedy has argued that S&L taxes should fall on the well-to-do and corporations. With his latest measure, which for jurisdictional reasons called for no specific tax, he had hoped to prod Bush to the same conclusion. Kennedy's amendment signaled that some Democrats are ready to slug it out with the President.

But not all Democrats want such a fight. The House leadership squashed Kennedy's previous efforts and did the same to his latest, which was co-sponsored by Jim Slattery, a moderate Democrat from Kansas. During the committee meeting, liberals Charles Schumer and Barney Frank led the charge against Kennedy, reflecting the wishes of House Speaker Tom Foley. Foley and the others maintained that the measure would undo the budget and result in undesired cuts or taxes. But that's the point: Flush Bush into the open and have an honest debate about who pays.

In committee, the Kennedy-Slattery proposal passed 28 to 21. But the entire R.T.C. bill failed. The leadership promised Kennedy he could offer his pay-as-you-go plan on the House floor but then arranged the vote to place Kennedy-Slattery in a most disadvantageous position. Still, on March 12, when the R.T.C. bill reached the floor, Democrats voted two-to-one for Kennedy-Slattery. They were thwarted by their own leadership, though, and the amendment sank, 237 to 186. The next day the House approved the $30 billion borrowing plan, which was sweetened by a weak reform provision for the expansion of affordable housing.

So Foley got his wish. On the Senate side, his comrade-in-compromise, majority leader George Mitchell, achieved a similar victory. When liberal Democrat Tom Harkin proposed that Bush merely be required to present Congress with pay-as-you-go options (which would not burden low- and middle-income taxpayers), he encountered the fierce opposition of Mitchell and racked up only twenty-eight votes in favor of this mild proposition. Perhaps Foley and Mitchell worry that the Democrats are vulnerable. They were partners with Reagan in the deregulation of the S&L industry. Four of the Keating Five are Democrats. And remember Jim Wright? But here came Kennedy and Harkin offering Democrats political redemption, and the party leaders took a powder.

■ Watch the Parking Meters

Foley's action on the S&L front is reminiscent of his handling of campaign finance reform last year, when the Speaker successfully engineered the late-night defeat of a set of decent, though hardly stringent, amendments that the House surprisingly had passed. Once again it's the season for campaign reform. This is a biennial ritual. Bills, some phony, others tough, are introduced. There is much hollering, and then nothing. Last year the Senate passed a moderate reform package, the House approved a weak bill, the two were never reconciled, and both expired. This allowed lawmakers to boast they voted for change while preserving the system through which they had won their jobs.

Now in the Senate a bill supported by Mitchell—and similar to the one that passed last year—would create a system under which candidates who abide by spending limits and raise a small threshold amount of contributions would receive public support equal to half the spending limit. This measure would also ban contributions from political action committees and limit the use of "soft" money—funds that fall outside federal restrictions. An alternative sponsored by John Kerry goes further, proposing that qualifying candidates receive 90 percent of the spending limit in direct payments and broadcast vouchers. More so than Mitchell's favored bill, Kerry's would squeeze most big-money contributors out of Senate races.

Public funding drives most Republicans batty. Last year only five senators of the G.O.P. supported the idea. But with their majority in both houses the Democrats could pass bills enshrining public funding. Then they would need the spine to confront Bush, who has threatened to veto such legislation. Inside the Democratic camp a split exists regarding PACs. On the House side, Representative Mike Synar is pushing a measure that would establish spending limits and subsidies comparable to the Mitchell-backed bill in the Senate. But it contains no PAC ban. Synar's reform would allow candidates to accept $110,000—and in some cases more—from PACs. Not coincidentally this reflects the view of Foley, who calls PACs "an important part of political campaign funds." Nevertheless, don't wait for Mr. Speaker to bless Synar's bill. Instead, watch for Foley to reprise his well-rehearsed role as blocker of the House.

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WATCHING RIGHTS.

ARYEH NEIER

On February 11 in Nairobi, I attended a dinner with about twenty lawyers who are active in Kenya's human rights defense bar. Although I have taken part in such gatherings in a number of countries, this was the first time that most of those present had been defendants as well as defenders. Some had spent years in prison; others currently face charges. Two Kenyan human rights lawyers, Rumba Kinuthia and Mirugi Kariuki, could not be there because they are in prison awaiting trial for treason, which carries the death sentence. Two others, Gibson Kamau Kuria—who was severely abused during more than nine months' detention without charge in 1987—and his partner, Kiraitu Murungi, have had to flee into exile and are currently at Harvard Law School.

One of the lawyers present, Gitobu Imanyara, 37, who had been imprisoned previously, was arrested again on March 1, at 8 A.M. outside his office. He is the founder and editor of *The Nairobi Law Monthly*, a journal that sells at least 15,000 copies each month even though there are only about a thousand lawyers in Kenya. Imanyara was already facing charges of sedition for publishing, in last July's issue, opposing views on whether Kenya should become a multiparty democracy (since 1982, Kenya's Constitution has outlawed opposition political parties). This time he was arrested because the cover story of the latest issue concerns Oginga Odinga, the country's Vice President at independence in 1963 and the man who has just taken the democracy debate to a new stage by announcing on February 13 the formation of an opposition party. Odinga's announcement was reported prominently in the international press, but not in Kenya until *The Nairobi Law Monthly* came out. That issue, which also carries the party's platform and an editorial raising questions about favoritism to President Daniel arap Moi's tribe in the distribution of public offices, was doing a brisk business on the newsstands of Nairobi. The day before Imanyara's arrest, plainclothes police seized copies from newsdealers; also that day, Imanyara was assaulted by stone-throwing thugs and barely avoided serious injury as he left his office in the evening. The security police, on hand as always to keep an eye on Imanyara, did not interfere.

What inspires admiration, even awe, in an outsider is the unhesitating readiness of Kenya's human rights lawyers to spring to one another's defense at great risk to themselves. By the time the police had spent thirty minutes at Imanyara's office searching the premises, several other lawyers appeared on the scene. Although the police took the prisoner out the back way, one of the lawyers, Martha Njoka, jumped in a car and followed them. When she reached the police station to which he'd been taken, several officers surrounded her car and wrested the ignition key from her. Undeterred, she entered the station to lodge a complaint against the police, which they refused to accept.

Njoka and another young lawyer, Beatrice Nduta, are defense counsel for Mirugi Kariuki in the treason trial. On February 6, Nduta was herself arrested on a complaint by the prosecutor in that case, the son-in-law of Kenya's Attorney General. Twenty-nine Nairobi lawyers, led by Paul Muite, subsequently elected chair of Kenya's Law Society, showed up in court to defend her. As she told me the following week in Nairobi, when she returned to her office from court she found messages from several other lawyers complaining that they had not found out in time to appear in her behalf. The lawyer representing Imanyara on the sedition charge, Pheroze Nowrojee, was cited for contempt in another political case. More than seventy lawyers offered to appear in his behalf. When he declined such mass representation, more than 120 lawyers turned up in court and sat through the proceeding to observe and to be observed. Another twenty attended at least part of the proceeding.

As a relatively affluent and comfortable group, lawyers in many countries are more prominent in upholding repression than in challenging it. Certainly, Kenya has its share of such lawyers and an even larger number who simply steer clear of such matters. Yet enough lawyers are defenders of human rights that the government cannot silence them all by singling out a few for especially severe reprisals. A significant escalation of repression would be required, and that would cause difficulty for a country economically dependent on tourism, on its reputation as a regional center for international commerce and on foreign aid.

Still, the inevitable question is, What accounts for the dedication of so many Kenyan lawyers to the human rights cause? Two explanations come to mind. First there is the relative prestige of the legal profession. Members of respected professions in other countries—scientists in the Soviet Union, writers in Czechoslovakia, priests in El Salvador and Chile—have often been at the forefront of efforts to promote human rights. Their status gives them more latitude than is enjoyed by others and insures that their persecution will not go unnoticed. Andrei Sakharov was exiled to Gorky and Yuri Orlov was sent to labor camp and then to Siberia, Vaclav Havel spent years in prison and Archbishop Romero and the six Jesuits were murdered, but the world paid more attention to them than to less prominent victims. Similarly, the world will notice what happens to the lawyers in Kenya, a country that preserves the forms of the British legal tradition and that needs its lawyers to maintain its pre-eminence as a regional commercial center.

The other explanation, I believe, is that a few remarkable individuals inspired their professional colleagues. One is the now-exiled Gibson Kamau Kuria. Although he is missed in Nairobi and it is evident to anyone who talks to him in Cambridge that his thoughts are focused on developments at home, he should derive satisfaction from knowing what he left behind: a group of lawyers who match his own courage and dedication in upholding the human rights cause. Another is Gitobu Imanyara. Although his current circumstances are bleak, he should be aware that his magazine has enabled the Kenyan legal profession to speak to a broader public that cares about matters of democracy and human rights. In the process, the lawyers acquired a sense of their own responsibility to champion these causes, a burden they seem willing to bear.

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ARTICLES.

CAN SOLDIERS STOP DRUGS?

Militarizing the Mexican Border

MIRIAM DAVIDSON

The first skirmish in what may someday be called the U.S.-Mexico Border War was fought on December 13, 1989. On that night, a small contingent of marines, patrolling the Arizona border as part of the government's efforts to militarize the war on drugs, came across a group of smugglers on horseback. The marines sent an illumination flare into the sky, and in the blaze of light that followed, shots were exchanged. The smugglers dropped their load—some 570 pounds of marijuana—and fled back to Mexico. Although no one was injured, the mission could not be termed a total success. The flare fell to earth and ignited a fire that burned 300 acres of federal forest land. Also, local law enforcement officials complained that they hadn't been told marines were patrolling in their area. "We have a responsibility to local residents who might call in and ask who these guys dressed in camouflage outfits and carrying M-16s are," said former Nogales Police Chief Rudy Acevedo.

The role of the military in the war on drugs represents an unprecedented departure from America's historical and legal tradition forbidding military involvement in civilian law enforcement. This tradition stems from the 1878 Posse Comitatus Act, which was originally intended to end Army oversight of Reconstruction-era elections. In late 1981 Congress amended the act to allow military participation in drug interdiction activities along the border and, despite some initial reluctance, the Pentagon has since warmed to the idea. Members of the armed forces are still forbidden to make searches, seizures and arrests, but they have taken on a broad support role for civilian law enforcement agencies that includes everything from building roads and fixing fences, to providing equipment and training, to conducting reconnaissance patrols and flights.

The military unit charged with coordinating this effort is the Joint Task Force-Six at Fort Bliss in El Paso. The J.T.F.-6 has responded to about 200 requests for support from law enforcement agencies in the Southwest border area since its inception in the fall of 1989, says public information officer Phil Reidinger. These requests come from a dizzying array of federal, state and local task forces set up to stem the flow of drugs; according to Reidinger, there are forty-nine such task forces in Texas alone. Reidinger won't give specifics about the number and types of operations J.T.F.-6 is currently engaged in, but he says there could be ten or more going on at any one time, each generally employing no more than fifty troops. All military operations are supposed to be supervised by civilian law enforcement; in the case of the shootout, the marines said they were ordered to fire by the lone Border Patrol officer with them.

The National Guard, which is not restricted by the Posse Comitatus Act, has also taken an active role in the border war on drugs. Guard units have been stationed at various crossing points along the 1,952-mile border from Brownsville, Texas, to San Ysidro, California, to search private vehicles and commercial trucks for contraband. In addition, the California National Guard is currently building a fourteen-mile access road that parallels the border, and some of its units have conducted armed reconnaissance patrols near the Mexican town of Tecate. Estimates of the numbers of California National Guard troops involved in drug-control activities range from 200 to 400 officers. The number of Border Patrol officers, customs agents and other civilian law enforcers concerned with stopping drug shipments at the border has also risen sharply in recent years. There are now around 4,000 Border Patrol agents stationed along the southwest border, almost double the number of six years ago.

Rumor had it that thirty Iraqi terrorists were planning to sneak into the United States on camels. Mexicans trapped on the U.S. side after the border was closed would be drafted.

While public hysteria over the drug menace has faded somewhat, the military presence along the border is growing. Defense Department appropriations for drug interdiction grew from $450 million in 1990 to $1.1 billion this year, and they are expected to reach $1.2 billion in fiscal year 1992. The National Guard will spend $100 million on the drug war in 1991. The total bill for drug interdiction along the southwest border is several billion annually.

The central question of whether all this man- and firepower is necessary is difficult to answer. Some officials say that since drug enforcement was tightened in Florida and the Caribbean during the early 1980s, 70 percent of the cocaine entering the United States now does so through the southwest border. They call the desert south of Tucson "cocaine alley." Yet a 1988 Congressional report on Operation Alliance, a coalition of interdiction task forces in the Southwest, said only one-third of the drugs entering the United States comes over the Mexican border. Roberto Martínez, who heads the Mexico-U.S. Border Program of the American Friends Service Committee in San Diego, says a 1989 Immigration and Naturalization Service (I.N.S.) study put the percentage of drugs coming over the Southern California border at only 4 to 10 percent of the

Miriam Davidson teaches journalism at the University of Arizona.

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total. "They can manipulate the figures to justify whatever they want," Martínez says.

Congressional critics also wonder if the border buildup is cost-effective. Since 1986, the Customs Service has spent more than $100 million to place seven radar balloons along the southwest border, an effort that has resulted in the apprehension of fewer than fifty smugglers. Jack Blum, chief investigator for the Senate Foreign Relations subcommittee on narcotics, called the balloon system "screaming idiocy." The program's defenders say its success can't be measured in terms of arrests; the deterrent factor is more important. The balloons appear to have encouraged many smugglers to switch to ground rather than air transport.

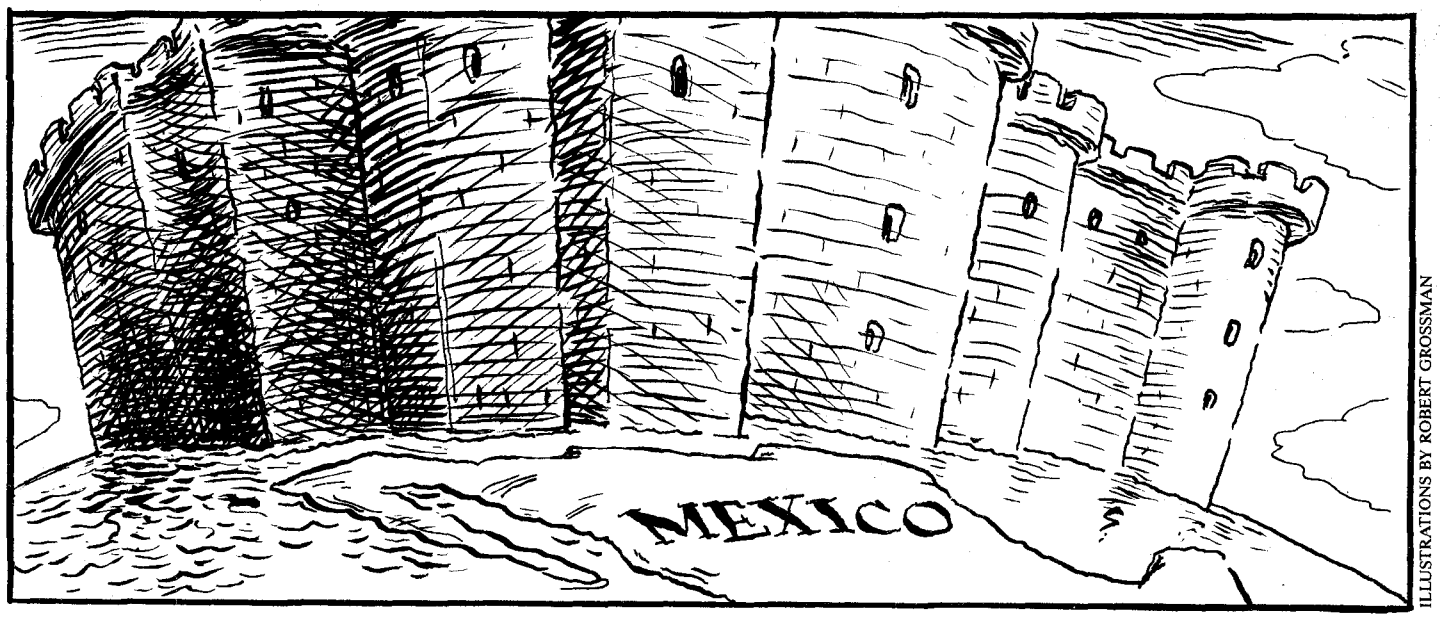
Another concern is the lack of coordination among the various law enforcement agencies now operating along the border. As in the case of the Marine shootout near Nogales, some local law enforcement officials believe military secrecy is preventing them from knowing what's going on in their own districts. The 1988 Congressional report on Operation Alliance cited another case, in which Border Patrol agents conducting surveillance near La Paloma, Texas, came within a mile and a half of four customs agents making a pot bust. The report went on to quote a memorandum on the incident: "The Customs officers were in plain clothes and unmarked vehicles and this could have easily developed into a dangerous encounter between two law enforcement agencies and the criminals, with the 'good guys' not knowing who the 'bad guys' were."

The proliferation of law enforcement agencies on the border has already had tragic consequences. In October 1988, a National Guard helicopter on its maiden nighttime surveillance flight in Imperial County, California, hit a power line and crashed, killing the three guardsmen and five sheriff's deputies aboard. The pilot was attempting to lower the craft over a suspicious vehicle, parked with its lights off, when the accident occurred. The vehicle turned out to belong to the Border Patrol.

Aside from the issues of effectiveness and coordination, the military presence along the border raises questions about constitutional and civil rights. The border has always been a place where, because of illegal immigration, dark-skinned people are routinely stopped; the drug war has only made things worse. One law professor at the University of Arizona calls the border a "deconstitutionalized zone," where the rights that people take for granted elsewhere are violated in the name of drug and immigration battles. The fact that some people say they don't mind being stopped doesn't mean their rights aren't being infringed; Maria Jimenez of the Immigration Law Enforcement Monitoring Project in Houston calls it "the abused community syndrome." Jimenez says many border residents come from Mexico or from Central and South American countries with authoritarian governments and either don't know their rights or are afraid to exercise them.

Although the armed forces along the border are supposed to focus only on drug smugglers, they have also started reporting illegal aliens. Some officials concede that the new roads, sensors and other equipment are being used primarily to catch illegal immigrants. Mexican-American activists say that law enforcement's confounding of the separate issues of immigration and drugs has resulted in an unfair and potentially dangerous situation. "We used to all be illegal aliens; now we're all drug smugglers," says Tucson attorney Isabel Garcia. A comment by I.N.S. spokesperson Verne Jervis validates Garcia's concerns. "We have found that there are so many Mexican nationals, legal and illegal, transporting drugs, that the two functions are intertwined," Jervis told *Tucson Citizen* reporter Ruben Hernandez. "It's hard to separate one from the other." Hernandez says some Border Patrol agents told him that if an alien runs away, he's probably carrying drugs.

Other Border Patrol officers agree with activists that immigration control is beyond the scope of the military. They question whether tactics and training designed to search for and destroy the enemy are really appropriate to the task. One agent told Hernandez that the military presence has changed an unwritten code of the border and may escalate the level of violence. "Before, when we met up with drug traffickers who outmanned us and were better armed, we would make a strategic retreat. And usually so would they. We would both back off from having to shoot." This agent criticized the use of a



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flare in the December 1989 incident as a "Marine tactic." "We never use flares on night patrol," he said.

The military presence may also threaten the property rights of border residents. Although civilian law enforcement officers are allowed to enter private property within twenty-five miles of the border, Posse Comitatus does not allow the military to do so. With almost half the land adjoining the border privately owned, and estimates of the amount of drugs entering over private land as high as 80 percent, officials say this restriction is significantly hampering their efforts. A measure that would have allowed the military on private property failed to gain Congressional support last year, although Tim Carlsgaard, an aide to Arizona Senator Dennis DeConcini, says law enforcement lobbyists are likely to keep pushing for that authority.

Members of an Indian nation that straddles the border have also objected to the military presence. The Tohono O'odham (formerly Papago) reservation covers 4,844 square miles southwest of Tucson, and many Arizona law officers believe it is honeycombed with smuggling routes. In February 1990, members of the Bureau of Indian Affairs' Marijuana Eradication Reconnaissance Team (MERT) were discovered on the reservation and told to leave by Tohono O'odham officials. George Barnett, then an attorney for the tribe, says he considers MERT a secret police, and he particularly objects to the fact that several MERT members were Indians from other reservations because it pitted Indians against Indians. Last year the Tohono O'odham rejected a government request to use troops on the reservation. Tribal members say they don't want drug traffickers on their land, but they also want the government to respect their sovereignty.

Despite the military buildup, officials insist they have no plans to seal the Mexican border. Aside from the logistical difficulties of closing a 2,000-mile border, such a move would severely cripple the economies of communities on both sides. Five years ago, however, the Reagan Administration was concerned enough about the infiltration of communist terrorists from Central America that it drafted secret plans, in the event of a national emergency, to round up aliens and other undesirables and close the border. Tim Dunn, a researcher at the Institute for Latin American Studies of the University of Texas, has learned that the plans were devised by the Alien Border Control Committee under the direction of then–Vice President Bush's Task Force on Terrorism. More recently, the war with Iraq prompted a number of rumors to circulate that the United States was again planning to seal the border. One rumor had it that thirty Iraqi terrorists were planning to sneak into the United States on camels. Another held that any Mexicans trapped on the U.S. side after the border was closed would be drafted into the Army. Cross-border traffic declined sharply, and customs inspectors at the crossing points took advantage of the shorter lines to check each vehicle more thoroughly.

Even if so drastic a scenario as closing the border never comes to pass, the question remains whether border militarization is really the best use of this country's antidrug resources. Many experts believe interdiction is an exercise in futility; domestic production, chemical synthesis and clever

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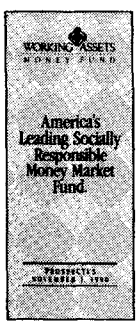

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smugglers can more than make up for the confiscated drugs. It's doubtful that all the troops, weapons, trucks, planes, helicopters, sensors, cameras and balloons amassed on the southwest border have resulted in one less addict on the streets of New York City. □

JUSTICE STILL DENIED

The Murders Go On in Amazonia

KEN SILVERSTEIN

Death will arrive one day
only the hour is uncertain
often it comes by surprise
and like a bolt from the blue.

When a cattle rancher and his son were convicted last December for the murder of Chico Mendes, some believed justice had come to the Amazon. It didn't take long to be disabused of that idea. On the night of February 2, Expedito Ribeiro de Souza—president of the local Rural Workers Union, member of the Communist Party (P.C.doB.) and author of the verse above—was slain in the small southeastern Amazon town of Rio Maria. Ribeiro was walking home from a union meeting when a hired gunman shot him in the back and then, as he lay on the ground bleeding, fired two bullets through his head.

Like Mendes, Ribeiro was internationally known. He'd been dead for five hours when an Americas Watch report, in which he featured prominently, was released in the United States. Otherwise, Ribeiro's death might have been another obscure entry on the list of nearly 1,600 killings of rural activists that have taken place in Brazil since 1964, when the military seized power and began its twenty-five-year rule.

The root of the violence is a pattern of landholding that ranks with Guatemala's as the most miserable in Latin America. Less than 2 percent of farms occupy more than half the land, while millions of impoverished peasants try to subsist on plots too small to support their families. Those without land are forced to work for local property holders (many of whom acquired their farms illegally) at a monthly wage often less than $30. Almost all the rural poor live in mud-and-wattle huts, and most, like Ribeiro, have no more than a grade-school education. Those bold enough to challenge this system are harassed, threatened, have their homes and crops burned, or, in the case of the truly stubborn, are killed.

The landowner who wishes to dispose of a political enemy has little difficulty. He need only contact one of the *agências de pistolagem*—rent-a-killer agencies—which operate semi-openly in many areas. They have names like The Sheik's Clique, Snake-Killer and The Colonel's Mafia, and employ mostly retired and off-duty policemen to carry out the hits. Many agencies offer a sliding scale for their services, depending on the target's prominence: roughly $600 for a peasant, the cheapest price; $2,000 for a priest; and $4,000 for an elected official.

In southern Pará state, where Rio Maria is located, the ground is watered with the blood of unionists. Raimundo Ferreira Lima was killed in mid-1980, and 172 other activists in the area have suffered the same fate since. In the town itself the bodies of Bras Antonio de Oliveira and Ronan Rafael Ventura were dumped in the middle of a road last April 4. Eighteen days later Paulo and José Canuto were kidnapped and killed. Their brother Orlando was also abducted but escaped after being shot in the stomach. Their father, João, had helped found the Rural Workers Union in 1983 and was its first president. Two years later he was cut down by fourteen bullets.

As Ribeiro's coffin was lowered into the ground—his wife, mother, nine children and two grandchildren facing a grim future without income—several thousand mourners cried out, "Justice, justice, justice!" It is a cry mostly ignored in Brazil. Only eight killers of rural activists have been convicted in the past twenty-seven years; not a single *pistoleiro* has even been tried for the murders of the 173 activists in Pará. Even in the Chico Mendes case only one of the group of landowners believed to have planned the murder was brought to trial. None of the others were even charged. As Osmarino Amâncio Rodrigues, one of Mendes's successors, said, "The head of the snake was not cut off." Official nonchalance toward these crimes was perhaps best stated by a judge in Rio Maria, José Candido de Morães, who shortly after Ribeiro was shot expressed surprise about the commotion caused by his killing and that of other recent victims. "They were only peasants," he said.

There is no reason to believe that those behind the violence will be satisfied until the last spark of peasant resistance has been stifled. After Ribeiro was killed, a note was delivered to his house saying Roman Catholic priest Ricardo Rezende and leftist congressman Waldir Ganzer would be the next to die. Since then, a gunman opened fire on Roberto Silva, a past president of the Rio Maria union—the only one to survive his term in office—and Carlos Cabral, Ribeiro's replacement, who was hit in the thigh. (Silva escaped injury.) Others living under death threats are Orlando Canuto, now in hiding; Cabral's wife and Orlando's sister, Luiza; and several other local activists. Nor has Rio Maria been the only site of violence recently. On March 8, in the town of Tailândia several hundred miles north, Sebastião Ribeiro da Silva, a director of the local union, was murdered in his home. A day earlier unionist José Alves de Souza was shot in the arm, back and leg as he stepped out of his house in the tiny village of São Pedro, across the border in the state of Tocantins.

Father Rezende attributes the murders in Rio Maria to a group of area landowners. Last year, as de Oliveira was being buried, some wealthy farmers were overheard chatting at a local bar. They boasted, "All the communists will die." More broadly, the government of Fernando Collor de Mello is also to blame for the violence, having reneged on a promised agrarian reform program and having failed to provide police pro-

Ken Silverstein is a journalist based in Rio de Janeiro.

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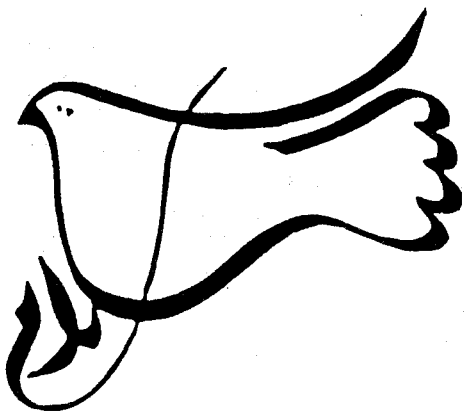
Palestine Solidarity Committee

EMERGENCY APPEAL

Since the Gulf War began, the Palestinians have joined the war's casualty list. The vast majority of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza continue to suffer shortages of food and medicine as the result of a complete curfew imposed several months ago. Economic losses impose extreme hardship on all families whose breadwinners cannot travel to work. Over 50% of nursing staffs and 25% of doctors cannot reach their workplaces due to the curfew. Food shortages are growing critical by the day, as farmers cannot feed their livestock or harvest their crops, while food distribution is severely restricted. Now that the Gulf War is over, Palestinians continue to suffer the hardships of military occupation.



- **Medical clinics**, committees and hospitals have been left short-staffed by curfew travel restrictions and are lacking even the most basic medical supplies. Your donation will allow health care providers to purchase essential supplies in the West Bank and Gaza and distribute first aid manuals to people in their homes, thus strengthening the weakened local economy as well as securing the needed medical aid. The special needs of children, the majority of the population, are a priority at this time.

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Show your support by looking over our list and mailing back your contribution with the form below indicating where you would like your donation to be spent. By contributing to these grassroots projects, you are not only responding to emergency needs but also enabling Palestinians to develop their own infrastructure and to strengthen their local economy. The threat of "transfer"-or mass expulsion-increases daily; your support is needed now more than ever. **Together, we can heed the call for support.**

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tection for those who have received threats. "Last year a group of congressmen and I met with Justice Ministry officials to request protection for Expedito," Father Rezende recalls. "They promised to take action, but nothing was done." Once, Ribeiro went directly to federal police headquarters in the state capital of Belém. Officers there confirmed they had an order to protect him but said they were too busy and had no men available to assign to his case. In Tocantins, Souza's local union requested police protection for him in February after he received a series of death threats. The Justice Ministry did nothing.

As Americas Watch points out, the Chico Mendes trial showed that international attention and public pressure can move the justice system to action. The uproar following Ribeiro's slaying resulted in the dispatch of a respected special police investigator to Rio Maria, who has arrested José Serafim Salles, believed to be the trigger man in the case. The man who shot Cabral is also in custody, and the Justice Ministry has belatedly agreed to provide protection for Cabral and several other unionists.

That is good news but hardly definitive. The landowner suspected of having paid Salles has disappeared. And arrests in Pará have never led to prosecutions. When the initial furor dies down, local police end their investigation and suspects are released by judges claiming there is not enough evidence to proceed. Father Rezende has asked that people help keep the pressure on by sending a letter or fax immediately to President Collor, demanding investigation and prosecution in the cases of Ribeiro and other victims, and police protection for all those under threat. The President's address: Palacio de Planalto, Brasília, Distrito Federal 70150. The fax number: (55) (61) 224-7442. □

Wellstone

(*Continued From Front Cover*)

of and for the rural poor. In 1970, he was one of two faculty members to participate in a student action against the Vietnam War and earned his first arrest. In the 1980s, he organized the Groundswell Farm Activist movement and was again arrested, this time for protesting the foreclosure of a family farm. Carleton's president tried to fire Wellstone when the professor-activist joined a sit-in to denounce the school's investments in South Africa. Wellstone ran unsuccessfully for State Auditor in 1982 but was elected to the Democratic National Committee in 1984. In 1988, he co-chaired the Jesse Jackson campaign in Minnesota—Jackson placed second there—and then helped unify the Jackson and Dukakis camps in the state, one of ten that went for Dukakis.

His impoverished run against Republican incumbent Rudy Boschwitz last year won much notice for its folksy touches: A green school bus carted Wellstone about the state, and good-humored ads teased Boschwitz for being top-heavy with cash. But the Wellstone campaign was also a continuation of the 1988 Jackson effort. The same progressive activists who labored for Jackson did much of the organizing for Wellstone, who repeatedly sounded populist and liberal themes, particularly on the subjects of health care, energy policy, taxes and campaign finance reform.

Now the question is, Can an ideological agitator be effective in the compromise-oriented, tradition-minded, usually genteel Senate? "I'm not coming to Washington to be marginal," he declared after the election. During a recent interview, Wellstone, a short, balding 46-year-old, ruminated about his plans. Perched on a leather chair in his office, with his feet on the edge of the seat and his knees drawn up to his chest—this is not how the self-consciously powerful in Washington sit—Wellstone, speaking quickly and often interrupting himself, said that the first step in being effective is defining what that means. The traditional view in Washington is that a productive senator is one who plays the game of vote trading, forges legislative compromises and achieves what in this town passes for respectability. Wellstone claims he is not in it for such respect. His job, he says, is to work "with a lot of people around the country—progressive grass-roots people, social-action activists—to extend the limits of what's considered politically realistic. I have always been a community organizer, and I can do that here."

In January, Wellstone appeared at a conference sponsored by the Coalition on Human Needs, a collection of more than 100 labor, religious, civil rights and other progressive outfits. He told the crowd, "The reason why I'm in the United States Senate is to try to stand with you and be a voice for your organizing and your work. . . . I can be most effective as a U.S. senator by working on the inside with other senators and at the same time working with grass-roots organizers in different communities around the country . . . to put the pressure on." When several lobbyists from public-interest groups met with a Wellstone aide in the Senator's office to discuss restructuring the S&L bailout, the Senator bounded over to the group and said, "Just tell me what you want me to do." At a recent breakfast with the staff of the American Civil Liberties Union, he presented a similar message. Wellstone is offering himself not just as a senator from Minnesota but as the Senator of the Left.

This upstart's Washington career began unconventionally. Following his upset victory, Wellstone broke one of the cardinal rules of the Senate by personally attacking another member, archconservative Jesse Helms. "I have despised him," Wellstone snarled during a postelection interview. "He represents everything to me that is ugly and wrong and awful about politics." Soon after he arrived in Washington, Wellstone issued a plea against going to war, using the Vietnam War memorial as a backdrop. Right-wingers and some veterans groups howled about his exploitation of the memorial. The day he was sworn in as a senator, Wellstone ignored tradition and asked fellow Minnesotan Walter Mondale to escort him to the ceremony, snubbing his state's senior Senator, Republican Dave Durenberger. At a reception, he thrust into the hands of Vice President Dan Quayle a tape of a Minnesota town meeting Wellstone had hosted weeks previously on the Persian Gulf crisis, and he cornered President Bush to tell him—politely—that he was screwing up the diplomatic effort and increasing the chances that war would come and lives would be lost. Bush pulled aside another lawmaker and, ac-

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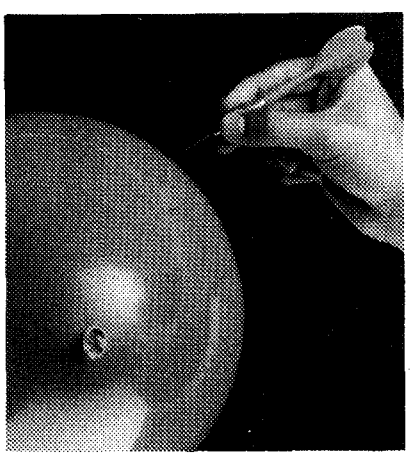

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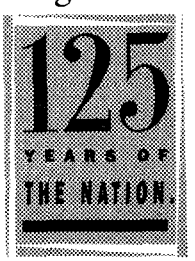

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cording to *Newsweek*, asked, "Who is this chickenshit?"

Wellstone acknowledges the need to watch the line between being persistent and principled and being obnoxious. In his first weeks as a senator, he strove to establish a good relationship with George Mitchell, the majority leader: "I sent the message that I will always let the leadership know what I'm up to. I won't blindside anybody." And Mitchell responded positively. Wellstone won the two committee assignments he sought, Labor and Human Resources, and Energy and Natural Resources—"how's that as a measure of effectiveness?" he boasts—and Mitchell included him in leadership meetings on the Persian Gulf crisis. It is no secret that the Senate runs on a certain amount of collegiality. Nonconformists may be tolerated; bomb throwers are not. "Everybody expects you to follow your conscience," says former Senator William Proxmire, who was a gadfly himself. "But you don't want to be seen as a pain in the ass. Then people will vote against you just because they don't like you. To make issues personal is a mistake. Even Helms is not unkind or hypercritical about other senators on a personal level, and that's one reason he's been effective."

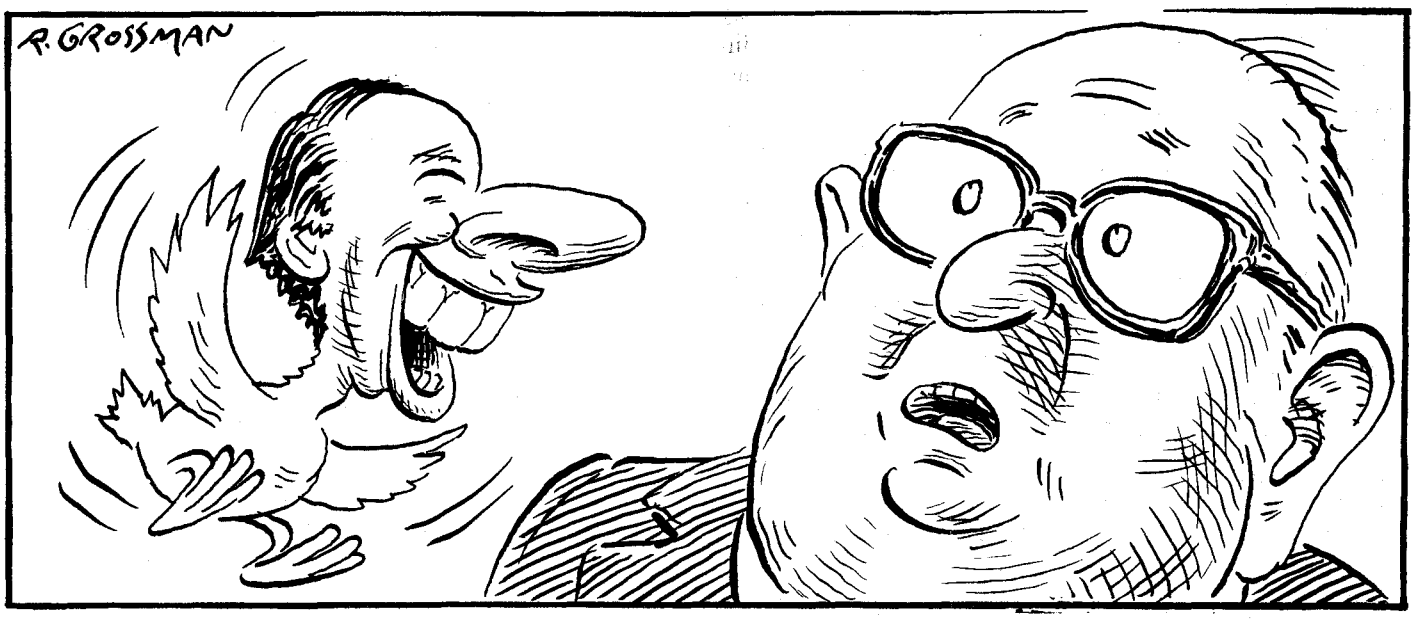
Wellstone is quick to point out that after spending years as an organizer he certainly knows the value of tact and coalition building. "That's not to say that there won't be conflict," he explains. "There will and there should be—but not in personal attacks. What's missing here is politics. Where do people draw the line? What are the differences between Democrats and Republicans? . . . Politeness means you treat people with sensitivity. But there gets to be a point, like with Helms. I said I can support the institution, but I don't support racist politics, which is what he represents. . . . Sometimes the personal level becomes the political level, and there is such politeness it's not clear to anyone on the outside what the differences are."

Wellstone's desire is to sharpen political contrasts in a body that does its best to suppress ideology. And he intends to do so as a member of a party that often ducks such delineations. He will be mindful of his relations with other senators—"do you know how many of these guys are millionaires?" he asks. "How did they do it?"—but Wellstone relishes the opportunity to push polarizing populist issues, such as progressive taxation, and to confront special interests, notably the hospital and insurance industries (on health care) and oil companies and utilities (on energy policy). "I don't use the term 'class warfare,' " he remarks, "but the Democrats are supposed to be the party of the people."

Wellstone's first test was the Persian Gulf war. During the Congressional debate on the measure to authorize the use of force, he delivered one of the more impassioned speeches against initiating war. Then the war began, and Wellstone was in a tough position. Clearly, he thought the war was wrong, but he voted for a measure supporting and commending Bush as the Commander in Chief. (There were no dissenting votes in the Senate and only six in the House of Representatives.) Wellstone calls that resolution a "mere footnote in history" and says that he helped water it down from the original, which hailed Bush's policy in the gulf. But he adds, "I accept as fair criticism that maybe I shouldn't have accepted that." Then came a decision on whether he should embrace the overwhelmed antiwar movement. Wellstone chose not to appear at the protest rallies: "I had no idea who was going to be there, what was going to happen, who was going to say what, before and after I spoke. . . . I decided I wanted to do it in my own forums." Perhaps this was a case of Senator Wellstone behaving differently from Professor Wellstone. "Obviously being in the Senate and having so much attention focused on you makes you more sensitive as to who will speak and what the demands are going to be," he remarks. "Is anybody going to burn a flag?"

Wellstone did supply office space and telephones to members of the Military Families Support Network, which protested the war, and he found his own vehicles for expressing his qualms. On the Senate floor, he called for another round of negotiations before Bush launched the ground war. Then he wrote an Op-Ed piece for *The New York Times* calling for a pause in the allied bombing to provide for a mediated Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait. Wellstone's staff invited other senators to share the byline, but there were no takers.

In formulating his position of questioning the war—it was



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not quite opposition—Wellstone spoke several times with Richard Barnet of the Institute for Policy Studies, the leftist think tank. "He was trying to figure out what type of role to play," Barnet says, "to determine what he could say that could possibly influence the direction of the war." As Barnet notes, it was easy for others to advise Wellstone to go it alone, strike an uncompromising stand and decry the war as it was being fought. "But he's the one who is investing six years and has to decide what makes sense in this context," Barnet adds. "I was sympathetic to the difficult position he was in."

Less taxing was a decision to join a very small Senate minority regarding the budget. On January 31, the Senate faced a vote on whether it should suspend the provisions of the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings budget law. This measure, which governs the budget agreement struck last year, contains an escape clause. In case of recession, Congress must vote to keep the budget limits in place. For budget critics, here was a chance to reopen the debate. Several Democrats have voiced reservations about aspects of the budget—the off-budget funding of the S&L cleanup, the size of the military budget or cuts in some social programs—but the Democrats agreed among themselves to forestall any challenge to the budget until a later point. A lone exception was Tom Harkin. On the floor he railed against Gramm-Rudman: "All of the programs that go to meet human needs and to help us get out of a recession, like job retraining and health and education, those are going to get cut right in the depths of a recession." He voted for suspension. On the way out of the chamber, Harkin passed Wellstone and asked how he had voted. Wellstone said he had gone along with the party consensus and that he expected to contest the budget deal further down the road. After hearing about Harkin's vote, Wellstone switched his. "I'll be damned if I'm going to have cuts, especially in programs for the poor, in order to meet some phony targets," Wellstone says. "I just wanted to lay out a whole speech to explain it and do a lot of organizing before. But if Tom was going to do it now, I was going to do it now. It was just two votes. But there will be many more votes next time."

Casting lone votes in the wilderness is the legislative equivalent of bearing witness. It is a noble exercise, but usually leaves little impression. Wellstone's task is to wield true influence in the Senate, and his path to power rests with his ability to expand the terms of various debates. He knows this. "You have to make a decision in the beginning," he explains. "If in the first year you are absolutely desperate to pass a piece of legislation, that puts you on one track." But that is a narrow, don't-rock-the-boat course from which a legislator cannot stray too far for fear of sinking his or her pet lawmaking endeavors. "I am not so desperate to have one-quarter of a loaf here or one-quarter there," Wellstone maintains, "that I don't want to introduce ideas or pieces of legislation that will take on a lot of folks in power." In Congress, where the urge for compromise is practically as immutable as the law of gravity, setting the reaches of the discussion often determines the resulting law. Few legislators are comfortable staking out ground too far from the middle. By pushing out the leftward boundaries, Wellstone can ease the task of his more moderate colleagues and help produce tangible victories.

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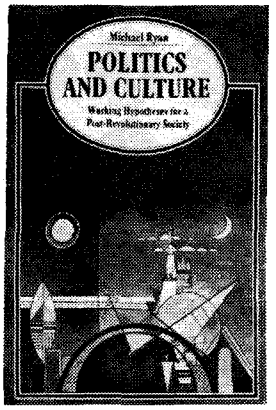

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A case in point is automobile fuel-economy standards. Last month, an aide for the energy committee stopped Mike Casper, a Carleton physics professor on leave to handle energy policy for Wellstone, in a Senate hallway. The chair of the committee, J. Bennett Johnston, is pushing a measure that might result in a modest increase in the standard for automobiles, currently 27.5 miles per gallon. Another Democrat, Richard Bryan, has written a bill to force automakers to meet a 40-miles-per-gallon standard. The committee aide, who is angling for the Bryan bill, noted that if some other member came in with a 45-miles-per-gallon bill, then the Bryan measure would be better positioned. But there's a problem. Conventional wisdom is that 40 miles per gallon is about as far as the car manufacturers can go without resorting to what's called "life style" changes—that is, major modifications in the size and performance of cars—and no one on the committee is willing to suggest that Americans sacrifice when it comes to their beloved cars. The aide wondered if Wellstone might propose something so daring. Casper made no commitment—he had to talk to his boss—but he indicated that Wellstone may be willing to do so. The Senator, he explained, is interested in fundamental change and is not afraid to suggest more far-ranging policy options.

In many ways, the Senate is the ideal place for a maverick. Each member has the right to put a hold on any bill and thus smother it. Howard Metzenbaum, the liberal Democrat from Ohio, frequently blocks pieces of special-interest legislation, much to the annoyance of his colleagues. Wellstone notes that he hasn't thought much about playing the obstructionist. (He has, though, spent a lot of time talking with Metzenbaum: "We share the strong belief that Democrats ought to zero in on economic issues.") Moreover, a senator is better able to make use of the bully pulpit than a House member. There are fewer peers to compete with for attention, and the higher status attracts the cameras. Wellstone, an ardent orator, is perfect for the news media.

A model for Wellstone may actually be his nemesis, Jesse Helms. Helms certainly knows how to stretch—and, in some cases, define—a debate. He is not afraid to rile fellow Republicans or the White House. As the ranking minority member of the Foreign Relations Committee, he routinely impedes the nominations of ambassadors who don't pass his ideological muster. He is devoutly loyal to a set of sharp political principles. He assiduously tends to home-state matters—just ask the tobacco industry—but his political audience extends beyond Washington and North Carolina. Helms has leverage within the Senate and shapes the political culture of the nation.

When asked about the potential parallel, Wellstone contorts his face, shrugs and says nothing, as if the very thought of such a comparison is too distasteful to contemplate. Naturally, he would not want to imitate Helms's demagogy or his embrace of special-interest campaign contributions. Wellstone has not yet demonstrated just how confrontational he is willing to be and whether he is able to transform contentiousness into political clout. But if he can assume a role at all close to that of a Jesse Helms of the left, there will be no cause to question the effectiveness of the junior Senator from Minnesota. □

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BOOKS & THE ARTS.

L.A. Raw

MARSHALL BERMAN

CITY OF QUARTZ: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles. *By Mike Davis. Photographs by Robert Morrow. Verso. 462 pp. $24.95.*

This is an impressive and fascinating book. Conceived in chutzpah, it takes an enormously complex and dynamic environment, twentieth-century Los Angeles, and tries to bring it to life as an intelligible whole. *City of Quartz* is big and bulky, the sort of book that evolves along with its author and takes forever to write. It draws on scholarly monographs, popular history, thousands of hours reading old newspapers—Davis really knows how to read a newspaper and makes a gold mine of the *Los Angeles Times*—and grows out of a lifetime's work, experience and memory. It talks about Hollywood, of course, but Davis (unlike most people who write books about Los Angeles) isn't obsessed with it; his obsessions run more toward less glamorous places and themes—the city's aerospace and electronics industries, its real estate and construction complexes, its industrial ghost towns (like Fontana, where Davis was born in 1946, and about which he writes beautifully) full of shattered dreams and awaiting new development—about which it's a lot easier to say something fresh. Davis also turns out to have great narrative gifts (readers of his theoretical pieces in *New Left Review* will be amazed), and he loves to tell stories—of families, neighborhoods, companies, political alliances; these stories make the book long and heavy, but also dramatic and exciting.

I just said that *City of Quartz* is refreshing in its neglect of Hollywood, but this isn't quite true. There's full-frontal Hollywood in Davis's back-cover self-presentation. He describes himself as a "former meatcutter and long-distance truckdriver" who now "teaches urban theory" at an architectural institute in L.A. and edits a socialist yearbook called *The Year Left*. He doesn't mention going to school anywhere or studying anything with anyone, so I guess we're meant to think he learned all he knows at the rack or on the road. Above the jacket copy there is an elaborately staged (and stagy) cover photo, in which the author comes on like Charles Bukowski's doomed younger brother. We see him standing on a closed overpass (evoking factory or prison design), dressed in proletarian clothes, glaring out at us as if to say this is his turf and he doesn't want company, hugging himself tight to fight off the D.T.s or maybe the existential cold. The look is that of an aging, ravaged light-heavyweight who could have been a contender but has taken too many to the head.

Like all good nineteenth-century novelists and Marxists, Davis is fascinated by the flow of capital.

This cover display (and under a Verso imprint—my own dear publisher, I confess) prepared me for a book that would be a show of macho theatrics and a catalogue of L.A. *noir* clichés promoted as the very latest (and hippest) Marxism. I wasn't turned on, so *City of Quartz* lay on my night table for weeks. But once I finally started to read the real thing, I found a book that is far more gripping and original than its cover. It is a Marxist book, all right, but Marxist in a refreshingly archaic way. It carries us back to Marx's histories, to *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* and the liveliest parts of *Capital*, and to the great nineteenth-century novels Marx and Engels loved. It is urban history in the spirit of Walt Whitman: It denounces plenty in the city's past and present, it strives to remember everything and it loves the whole.

Why the great gulf between Davis's book and his cover? I will try to suggest why later, but first let's talk about the book's strengths. Like all good nineteenth-century novelists and Marxists, Davis is fascinated by the flow of capital, and he has a gut feeling for its inner dramas. The grandest narratives in *City of Quartz* are histories of money. Los Angeles's longest-running drama of money, going back to the 1920s, has been the struggle of downtown money versus Westside money. Downtown has been L.A.'s traditional WASP fortress, dominated by the Otis and Chandler families and their tributaries, and represented for generations by the *Los Angeles Times*. At the end of the nineteenth century, downtown capital, in a great burst of activity, turned Los Angeles from a backwater into a thriving metropolis. (What they most wanted was to get ahead of San Francisco, and in many ways they succeeded.) The city's first families were brilliantly resourceful in working the federal system, enticing Washington to pay for L.A.'s giant infrastructure: Billions of dollars in federal funds subsidized a megalopolitan water supply and created what Davis says is the biggest man-made harbor in the world. These downtowners were pillars of the G.O.P.'s far right, violently antilabor, xenophobic, racist and anti-Semitic.

The newer galaxy of Westside money, spreading from the Hollywood movie studios, has always been mainly Jewish and liberal Democratic. As early as the 1920s, it broke ranks with downtown capital (represented by the Merchants and Manufacturers Association) and asserted its willingness to live with labor unions. The Studio Master Agreement of 1927 promised long-term security in exchange for guarantees of labor peace, and it introduced a model of relatively enlightened capitalism into the city's lifeline. For half a century, the conflict between downtown and Westside capital made L.A. "a city with two heads," locked into "Darwinian place wars" over what shape the ever-growing creature would take.

What saved these two nodes of capital from eating each other up was the emergence of a third node that eventually grew big enough to absorb them both: the defense industry. Davis identifies the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena as the industry's great pioneer, taking off just after World War II. Robert A. Millikan, the Chicago physicist who became the institute's first president, created an *apparat* that acted with "unbounded enthusiasm for alloying physics and plutocracy." Nowhere else in America "did there develop such a seamless continuum between the corporation, laboratory and

Marshall Berman, author of All That Is Solid Melts into Air *(Penguin), teaches at the City University of New York and writes about cities and modern life.*

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classroom." Davis portrays prewar Caltech as a colony of rich and dotty racist WASPs whose often first-rate scientific theorizing fed weird mystical cults and proto-Nazi machine dreams; its first outstanding product was Scientology. (What a pity that Kaufman-Ryskind or Preston Sturges never got a shot at them. And think of Groucho as President!)

With the earthquakes of World War II and the cold war, this cloud-cuckoo-land was abruptly dropped into the center of America's military-industrial complex. Caltech both fed on and spun off gigantic federally subsidized corporations: Aerojet General, the RAND Corporation, the Jet Propulsion Laboratory and so on. Davis claims that, since the late 1940s, the Southern California defense industry has cost the rest of the country up to $20 billion per year in income transfers. Nice work if you can get it! In the Los Angeles universe, the giants of defense/aerospace paralleled the movie studios but soon eclipsed them in wealth and power. They recruited a highly educated, cultured and cosmopolitan labor force, which despite its dependence on American militarism has pulled L.A.'s political demography to the left. (The leftward movement of the *Times* since 1960 reflects this new class of readers. The Chandlers must turn in their graves.)

Defense and aerospace have flooded the land with jets of new capital, which has finally brought Los Angeles's classic elites together. With the fountain overflowing, the Westside versus downtown struggle got to look pretty silly, and the city's capitalists mellowed out. They came to believe that the United States' permanent war economy guarantees L.A. a more or less permanent boom. Davis hates their guts but basically agrees with them. In Los Angeles, Randolph Bourne's 1917 judgment "War is the health of the state" turns into a Hollywood dream come true. Davis pays grudging respect to Mayor Tom Bradley, who has recognized the new ball game and put together an elite united front. But he can't bring himself to bend so far backward as to praise Ronald Reagan, whose decade of militarist Keynesianism is really the main spring that feeds L.A.'s golden shower today.

One of the book's big problems is that, after this epic portrayal of L.A.'s wealth, it's hard for Davis to get down, and to get us down, into the depths of its poverty. It isn't that he doesn't know the city's ghettos and barrios. Yet in his rendering they sound strangely remote. His discussion of the efforts of the comfortable to lock out the poor is more vivid than his descriptions of the poor themselves. Some of it may simply be Davis's limitations as a writer; so he's no Balzac or Dickens or Dreiser—who is, in 1991? But some of it may go deeper. Think back to the Watts riot, when the L.A. ghetto got its first national exposure. Remember how reporters would say: These people have houses with yards! They have cars! Fruit falls off the trees! You can get to the beach! How can they be angry? I felt mortified at my fellow Easterners' provincialism and wished somebody would make those guys go back to school and learn a little bit about racism and poverty. But even now, even when Angelenos themselves want to tell this story, there seems to be something about L.A.'s fatal aura that alienates them from it. It's as if the sun, the sea, the foliage, the freeways, the neon and the flow generate a kind of giant schmear that blots out the sense of poor people's pain, even in people who live closest to the pain.

It's as if the sun, the sea, the freeways and the neon blot out the sense of poor people's pain.

(Darryl Strawberry, Crenshaw High's Raskolnikov, always brought this pain home to New Yorkers; will he hurt less now that he's gone home with millions in the bank? And you could see it in NWA [Niggers With Attitude], L.A.'s premier "gangsta rappers," in their explosive video, "Straight Outta Compton": They are trying to break through the L.A. aura, and for an instant they *do* break through it; thanks to that magic moment they've broken out of Compton, and today they are stars, celebs, looking like Hollywood millionaires, heroes of a million black and white American dreams.)

Davis presents an elegantly indignant chapter on L.A. culture, "Sunshine or *Noir*?" The city's official culture in the 1980s looked like an endless, complacent celebration of its announcing another magnificent project: a sculpture pavilion, an avant-garde museum, a concert hall, a "culture park," everything to be built on a breathtaking scale, by one or many world-class architects at costs that ran into the billions. Davis is nauseated by this spectacle: by the ways in which culture seemed to become an adjunct of real estate development; by the official practice of importing celebrities, "buying Culture straight off the rack of the world market"; but equally by its opposite, the attempt to "discover seductive motifs that can be used as brand labels for culture 'made in L.A.'" He thinks "the boom in public art and cultural monumentality has gone hand in hand with a culture depression in most of the inner city." It outrages him that "the $35.2 million that the Getty family recently paid for a sixteenth-century work by the little-known painter Pontormo was many times the city's annual budget for culture in [black] South-central and [Latino] East Los Angeles."

Davis is mad that, with all the capital sloshing around L.A. culture in the 1980s, its black and Latino and inner-city art scenes were as starved as ever (and, in relative deprivation, poorer than ever) and completely written out of the universe of the people who wrote the big checks. On the other hand, he also seems to feel, in a left-puritanical way, that wealth is bad for people: It corrupts their vision and judgment and authentic feeling; it makes them contemplative rather than confrontational; it entices them to go to museums and look at old paintings instead of going into the streets (onto the freeways? into the malls?) to fight the power. Now there's nothing wrong with holding contradictory values—don't we all?—but Davis doesn't work to sort his inner contradictions out. And he has this other problem: His prose sags when he tries to talk about the good folks in the barrios and the ghettos, the black and Latino neo-Joad families whom the boom has marooned, but it soars again as soon as he gets back to the bad guys moving the big bucks around.

Some of Davis's strongest and most poignant writing is about people who not only stand clearly within L.A.'s golden shower but have done a lot to design and install it: the water engineer and buccaneer William Mulholland; the enlightened industrialist Henry J. Kaiser; and, most surprisingly, the city's three generations of Jewish builders and real estate men. As a Jewish reader, I'm delighted to discover Davis's empathy for us—God knows, there isn't so much out there, and what there is usually settles on Jewish victims. (Davis himself seems to have grown

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up as some sort of Christian, but he is vague as to what sort.) And I admire his capacity to feel for a group of Jews that I have always been simply ashamed of. He shows how Jews are far more deeply involved in Los Angeles's economy and politics than people generally think, and he is acutely sensitive to the ironies of their historical role. As self-conscious individuals, and as politically organized groups, Jews have always pushed L.A. (as they have pushed every other city into which they have ever been thrown) to the liberal left. But the momentum of their drive for capitalist wealth has pulled the political economy of the whole region to the right.

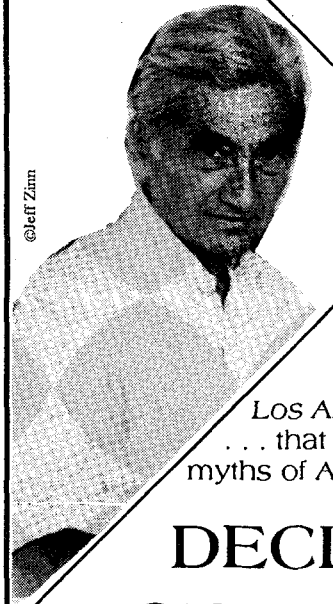
In the decades after World War II, downtown elites, frightened by the attrition of their properties, started to criticize the city's fragmentation and to try out a language of mutual aid, civic responsibility, a general will. Westsiders fought fervidly against all this, not only against people Davis can't stand but also against a body of ideas—scholars call it "classical republicanism"—in which, as a socialist, he at least partly believes. The fight engendered a vanguard of Jewish homebuilders and savings-and-loan bankers who became creative political entrepreneurs. Like earlier generations of the California ruling class, they specialized in working the federal system. They learned to channel the great postwar flow of the city's resources farther and farther out into the suburbs. They not only promoted the romance of individual mobility, of the car, the freeway, the shopping center; they fought like hell against mass transit and its roots in the city. Their first big political victory, in the heat of the cold war, was to mobilize mass fears of "socialism" to defeat downtown's master plan for integrated mass transit. Davis is always glad to see the downtown bad guys get stiffed, but this time—and he knows it, though he can't quite bring himself to say it—the urbanism of the bad guys was right.

After their transit triumph, the developers' next coup was an elaborate system of suburban "exit privilege," which enabled neighborhoods to split off from the city and become instant new towns. Again and again, in the '50s and '60s, they zoned Los Angeles's poor and colored people off their streets and out of their schools, while using the city's water and power (and sometimes fire and police) for a fee. The developers wrestled with their liberal consciences, and they won. The next phase was homeowners' associations, on which Davis offers a brilliant chapter, "Homegrown Revolution." Homeowners' associations exist all over the United States, but they are especially potent in Southern California, where they became the organized developers' special protégés. Davis shows in lurid detail how they have exploited populist and New Left slogans—power to the people, community control—in order to keep their towns pure and free from the homeless and the poor. In the mid-1970s they were the vanguard of Nimby, Proposition 13 and the Reaganite "revolt of the haves." Today, Davis says, they appeal to our environmental cares and fears with the magic words "slow growth." Davis argues that the words change with the decades but the idea stays the same: to create institutional mechanisms for people who are doing well to duck responsibility for those who are not.

The story of these homeowners' associations is truly horrific. Dr. Frankenstein is played by Davis's developers, who have lost control of the process of development. Can they, or anybody, regain control? Davis is uncertain. But he gives us a vivid glimpse of a group of businessmen who love their city and feel guilty as

We hold these truths...

"There are just and unjust wars . . . Our constitution is our greatest guarantee of liberty . . ." In Declarations of Independence Howard Zinn challenges these and other of our most cherished beliefs . . . .



In These Times: "It is precisely his focus on the unexamined issues that makes Zinn's book exceptional and vital . . . a timely and important wake-up call to Americans who slumber in the netherworld of ideology."

Los Angeles Times: "A shotgun blast . . . that aims to shatter all the comfortable myths of American political discourse."

DECLARATIONS OF INDEPENDENCE

Cross-Examining American Ideology

Howard Zinn

author of *A People's History of the United States*

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hell for getting rich by running it down. You could say, Yeah, they cry all the way to the bank, and it would be true, but only part of the truth. Anybody who has ever tried to raise money for any progressive cause knows how many L.A. Jewish millionaires—just like their *landsleit* in New York—are eager to back attacks on the social system that they have helped to make and that has made them the torn and driven men they are today.

Narratives like these not only show Davis at his best but also, I believe, show Marxism doing what it can do best: bring us closer to the historical long waves that drive and wreck our everyday lives; force us to see ourselves and one another and our whole society and all our inner contradictions in depth face to face. If Marxist thought can do that, I think it has plenty to be proud of. But I know a lot of people for whom that isn't enough; they feel Marxism has to provide a transcendent revolutionary *zap*. It has to bestow the powers that Jim Morrison pursued—to break on through to the other side, to bring on the end—or else it isn't worth anything at all. Heavy hitter veterans of the Used Left (I'm talking 'bout my generation) haven't outgrown their yearning for a big bang.

Davis's yearning for a big bang gives *City of Quartz* a strong, weird undertow. It makes him regret that he's written a Whitmanesque book that embraces his whole city—or at least a hell of a lot of it—and wish instead that he'd written a Célinesque book that could tell the whole city to go to hell. It leads him to intone again and again the word "oppositional," and to infuse it with a magical power; to speak reverentially of the 1965 "Watts rebellion" without suggesting any of this event's darker sides; to quote more than once, without apparent irony, Peter Plagens's 1972 statement that "L.A. needs the cleansing of a great disaster or founding of a barricaded commune"; to surround today's Crips and Bloods and gangster rappers with a revolutionary aura. It explains his back-cover shtick, where he comes on as a drunken prizefighter—or is it a drugged prisoner? It helps explain why, granted the freedom of a lavish graphics section, he has filled the whole thing with photos by Robert Morrow, portraying a cosmos of churches, cemeteries, power lines, sewage plants, guard towers, blast furnaces, each one alone under a burning sun, in a cityscape starkly empty of people ("the death of the subject"?), evoking a city that has been evacuated, like the one in *On the Beach*, waiting for the end, or maybe even after the end. Ironically, Davis's "Sunshine or *Noir*?" essay offers a perceptive analysis of how radical jeremiads against L.A., from *The Day of the Locust* to *Chinatown*, have always been incorporated into the city's official mythology. Indeed, the more extreme and apocalyptic the better: L.A.'s boosters have always thrived on anything that makes the city appear grotesque, unearthly, far-out, "this-is-the-end." He knows, but he just can't stop: It's his undertow, and he's got to go with the flow.

Mike Davis is 45 years old this year, and two souls seem to be struggling in his breast: the radical citizen who wants to grasp the totality of his city's life, and the urban guerrilla aching to see the whole damned thing blow. Who will he be, or try to be, in the '90s, Whitman or Céline? He sounds unsure, but I'm rooting for Whitman. Davis's mind keeps flaring up with technopocalyptic *Blade Runner* fantasies, but his strength as a writer, for which *City of Quartz* will be remembered, is his capacity to evoke Los Angeles as a real place with a rich concrete history and a vivid, recognizable everyday life, and a system of public transit to the urban sublime. The values that animate this book—denounce plenty, but remember all and love the whole—can point a way, not only to write a city's history but to make it. If the Used Left can find ways to stay radical even as we become solid citizens, our cities will be a lot more lived in and the middle of the journey will be fun. □

Buffalo Lost and Found

JOANN WYPIJEWSKI

THE LAST FINE TIME. *By Verlyn Klinkenborg. Knopf. 209 pp. $19.95.*

I never knew my Uncle Edwin—"knew" in the sense of understanding—never had a personal conversation with him. Of course I was very young when he was coming around to our house on Buffalo's far East Side to help weed my grandmother's garden. He was her sister Proxy's oldest son, and always something of a mystery to us children. One of the few in our family to have a college degree, it was unclear what he did when he wasn't, on those odd occasions, weeding in our backyard. He'd been married, had four children, but all this he'd abandoned, for an uncertain objective. Then he disappeared. For years the family relied on sightings of Edwin to know he was alive; and as I rode the No. 6 bus up Sycamore Street home from high school, I'd peer out the window, assessing the rubbery figures near the shabby bars that marked every few blocks of this thoroughfare of the East Side. I never found Edwin in this way—and half-wondered what I'd do if I did—but by all accounts these men were his company. Years earlier, at the party celebrating his valedictory to college, top of his class, his sister-in-law had asked him brightly, "So what will you do now, Edwin?" He looked at her with an uneven smile, his face all fine angles, and said, "I'm going to be an educated bum."

Though it should have been easier, in the same way I never knew Edwin's brother Ray, who worked at Niagara Machine, was quick with the jokes and frequently stopped by our house for a boilermaker and a visit with my grandmother and her beloved maiden sister Anna. After Ray retired from the plant he passed his time at Zywicki's, the tavern near his house on Sycamore Street. For years before, his wife had feared open spaces, so Ray had attended most family occasions alone, playing the wry jester, with myself or my sister as straight man and later as easily baited antagonist in what always turned out to be a mock political dispute. Because of the nature of those exchanges I was never quite sure what he or any of my relatives who engaged in similar sport with me thought about the world, the city and the conflicts that raged there in the '60s and early '70s. In a sense, the uncertainty was a relief. The nerves that led Ray's wife to keep to the house and then the domestic changes that took place once she lost these inhibitions and longed for adventure while he'd retired to Zywicki's were also unknown to me. So was the character of my Uncle Chet's loneliness, my father's shy, cheerful brother who worked all his life in the steel mill, drank at the Doat Grill and lived downstairs from us with his mother and aunt until his mid-40s, when he married a somewhat garish and nervously talkative woman named Olga.

Ray is dead now. So is Chester, so is Olga. Edwin wrote my father a wistful letter upon Chester's death and stole into the funeral parlor to view Ray's body

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while none of us were there; otherwise, he remains a ghost. I have never thought there was any special tragedy about these people. They were the working class that drank in the neighborhood bars, bars like George & Eddie's farther down Sycamore Street which Verlyn Klinkenborg eulogizes in *The Last Fine Time*. To a Polish Catholic on Buffalo's East Side it was understood that almost everyone had some secret sadness and that somewhere someone else was probably paying for that sadness. In a family such as mine, where sorrows and other intimate matters are closely held, you didn't talk about such things. You rarely talked about work because so much of life was spent doing it that time off was just that. And when you heard stories of the past, they seemed always tinged with romance. True stories—that's the allure of romance—but never quite complete. Perhaps there is something of this same approach to life in the family of Eddie Wenzek, Klinkenborg's father-in-law and the hero of *The Last Fine Time*. The pity is that Wenzek's story has been appropriated by a creative-writing teacher from Harvard who seems oblivious to the delicate means by which people may choose to mediate their own life histories. Romance here has lost its honest function of self-protection and parades as social history.

"The last fine time" of the title is 1947, the year young Eddie Wenzek took over his father's East Side tavern, renamed it George & Eddie's after his brother-in-law and himself, and transformed it from a rough workers' bar to a stylish nightspot more congenial to the assimilationist impulses of his own generation. For Klinkenborg there is pretty much a straight line from the history of this bar (established in 1922, sold in 1970) to the history of Buffalo; from the story of the Wenzek family (Eddie's father's migration from Piwniczna in the Austro-Hungarian Empire to 722 Sycamore Street, and Eddie's ultimate migration from 722 Sycamore to the suburbs) to the story of the ethnic working class.

In 1947 the bar is no longer a representation of society's "sordid and hapless elements," as Woodrow Wilson had characterized Eastern European immigrants; no longer a place where, as in Eddie's father's day, "people drank with a kind of desperation." In 1947:

> Eddie stirs up poems of contentment, mixes sonnets of self-congratulation, shakers odes to quiet oblivion. . . . He knows how whiskey will curdle and how it will parch and how, when it neither curdles nor parches, it will warm a room full of tired strangers into friendship.

George & Eddie's is a font of optimism, a terminal to upward mobility; persistent drunks go elsewhere. Klinkenborg doesn't allow the Wenzeks themselves, or any other East Siders, to speak, so we can only imagine that his account of the bar is a rendering of their sentimental reminiscences. But how malleable these reminiscences are. Earlier in his story, when it suits his image of Buffalo's railyards in the 1930s as the shimmering arteries of commerce (where "danger was just part of what made America's greatest open-air industry so fascinating"), Klinkenborg describes the thousands of railroad workers who stop at Eddie's aunt's tavern not as people who drink "with a kind of desperation" or even who drink to soften the rigors of the job or to maintain some community of feeling but rather as a brotherhood that drinks in continual affirmation of the grandeur of the railroad:

> If the lowest day laborer on the Lehigh Valley Railroad crossed Dingens Street to the Black Diamond Bar on his lunch hour and downed three ounces of rye with a nickel bowl of Julia Pajonk's soup for company, it must have been because he was in his glory.

My grandfather worked as a machinist for the railroads. He died of emphysema when my father was 18 years old. In my grandmother's house, which he built, he was remembered not as an overalled laborer but as a gentleman. The photograph that sat on her bureau had him standing in tie and top hat on the veranda of an observation car. This was his self-representation for posterity. Who can say that another worker's might not be different, might not extol the job over the man? And if Eddie Wenzek thought he was mixing up "poems of contentment," who can say it isn't in some sense true? But in the absence of self-representation we must take on faith this portrait of the family, the community, the bar, from a man who in his more ambitious tasks gets things amazingly wrong.

From the first words of the prologue Klinkenborg disqualifies himself as Buffalo's biographer. "Snow begins as a rumor in Buffalo, New York." Snow—the cheap association every amateur joker makes with Buffalo? Rumor—the hint of subterranean preoccupation? Nothing bores Buffalonians I know more than the ready equation of the city with snow-

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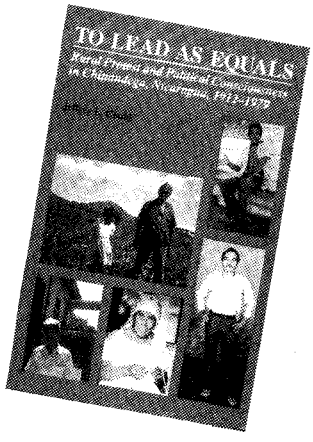

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storms; and nothing is approached with more equanimity than those same snowstorms. It snows, you clear the driveway, you get on with life. For Klinkenborg, though, snow is an obsession, the thing that has cashiers gossiping "at every checkout aisle" around town, that has people standing at their windows "all across the city," that has homeowners hallucinating themselves into houses "built of logs and chinked with sphagnum moss," where "you might wake up in the morning and find the windswept tracks of lynx and snowshoe rabbit running down the middle of the street." This is "creative writing" to extremity. And while the subject may seem petty, the implication is not, for Buffalo's relationship to snow is so basic, given the way the city is routinely caricatured, that to get it wrong is quite a profound failure of perception.

Romance of the sort plied by Klinkenborg, however, requires only a simulacrum of reality. He chooses 1947, a date determined entirely by his father-in-law's personal history, as the point where all the fault lines in the city's economy and in American society became clear—if not immediately, then at least as a vague sense of dis-ease (a sense he anthropomorphizes with an annoying writing-school trick, the recurrent appearance of a faceless man in a good brown suit "with the back of one pantleg caught in his sock").

The war years had indeed blessed Buffalo. With industrial expansion fueled by more than $5 billion in military contracts, it was said to be "Christmas every week." The peace brought shock waves. In 1947 Curtiss-Wright, which had made fighter planes and at its peak employed 40,000 people, moved away, laying low its work force of 5,500. No doubt this fact bolstered Klinkenborg in his assertion that after the war Buffalo's heavy industry started to "shut down and then to collapse." But the plant Curtiss-Wright abandoned out by the airport not too far from where I grew up didn't sit idle; it was bought by Westinghouse, which grew steadily, employing 7,200 in 1970. Back in 1947, as three unions vied for recognition at Westinghouse, it's unlikely that anyone had the uneasy feeling that in thirty years the plant would be scaling down and in exactly forty, would collapse.

As it had so often, military spending recharged the economy. In 1951 *Fortune* hailed Buffalo's industrial diversity, noting, as recounted in Mark Goldman's excellent book *City on the Lake* (Prometheus), that here was "the eleventh largest industrial center in the country, . . . the third largest producer of steel, the largest inland water port, the second largest railroad center, and the 'first city in the world' in flour milling—Buffalo produced enough flour to supply every family in the country with half a loaf of bread every day." Vulnerable as it was historically to the fluctuations of the business cycle, Buffalo suffered again in the 1958-59 recession but rebounded with Vietnam War contracts, investment tax credits that spurred the steel industry to unprecedented profits, and a surge in auto-related industries that appeared unstoppable.

For forty-six years, until 1988, my father worked first as a machinist and then as a tool and die maker in one of those industries, at a locally owned company called Trico Products which dominated the world market in windshield wipers. Our family regarded Trico as a place of awesome persistence, since it was one of the few companies that had hired throughout the Depression, a life preserver to my mother's grandparents when her Aunt Mary got work there in the mid '30s. When my father returned to his job after serving in the Pacific, he had every reason for optimism, and in the 1960s, when he worked at Plant 2 on Main and Rodney, it was inconceivable that twenty years on the plant would move its operations, along with those of Plant 3, to the Texas-Mexico border. (Plant 1 remains in town.) It's easy enough now to say it might have been expected; the great daylight factory that housed Plant 2 was itself a monument to industrial shift, serving first the needs of Ford in the early part of the century; later Bell Aircraft, when Buffalo's formidable plane-building operations expanded for war; and then, from 1945, Trico. Today, function again following the city's financial trend lines, this model of industrial architecture is the site of an enormous flea market.

It's also true that history might have provided a guide. In 1900 the Lackawanna Iron and Steel Company moved from Scranton, Pennsylvania, to the outskirts of Buffalo partly because it was assured a docile, unorganized labor pool of thousands of Eastern European immigrants. In 1937 General Motors was drawn to Buffalo's nonunionized industrial work force while mapping its retrenchment following the Flint sitdown strike. Even Westinghouse's arrival from East Pittsburgh was prompted by a corporate policy to decentralize production, weaken local unions and turn the tables in labor relations. Alex Blair, who teaches at the Buffalo extension of Cornell's School of

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Industrial and Labor Relations, says that the Westinghouse move was one of the last in which a major company shifted operations to a major Northeast city. Docile, nonunion workers—a prime element in marketing Buffalo in its headiest days—were to be found elsewhere.

So Klinkenborg has a point when he says that there were auguries of Buffalo's decline; but weren't those also evident in 1935, when a bankrupt city forever abandoned the notion that its economy could function without federal intervention? or in the 1920s, when business consolidations made it subject to outside economic control, immigration restrictions ended the easy flow of cheap labor, and the idea was first broached for a seaway to the Atlantic that by 1959 would shatter its pre-eminence as a lake port? And even if 1947 were so pivotal, would the people at George & Eddie's be sensing doom (and fearing the Bomb and puzzling about advertising, as the brown-suited man also suggests) over their cocktails and french-fried shrimp? Most people who work every day to get through to another one aren't psychically pestered by structural calamities lurking beyond. Besides, this was the American Century, and in Buffalo, where since at least 1893 busts and booms had occurred with metronomic regularity, capitalism had always seemed to come through. When it hadn't, there was still the federal government.

Hawthorne, I think, said romance needs ruin, and so Klinkenborg needed a kind of blueprint of ruin from which to construct the architecture of his story. Not that he couldn't have found ruin—and history and humor and hope—in the stories of Buffalo's Polish working class who'd gathered around George & Eddie's. But that would have been a different book and, crucially, a different audience. Klinkenborg can get away with his remarks about the snow and his reductive and stylistically overheated assessment of the city's life because he's writing not for Buffalo but for New York, a matter underscored by the book's earlier incarnation as a *New Yorker* article and by Klinkenborg's own elevation as a sensitive expert on the region, most recently in *The New York Times* and *Harper's*. For this audience—not the working class and its students but the culture-guarding, authority-granting class—it is enough that Buffalo emerge in essences:

> The city is a secret, not a place. Buildings glisten with concealment. Stores tease you with the merest hint of inven-

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> tory. Couples disappear quite knowingly within an edifice that's possibly a mosque, a tomb, a planetarium, but is actually a bank. Whole gangs of women vanish through an archway as other women exit, laughing. Distracted figures crabwalk up the steps of City Hall, but what they do once there is anybody's guess. Men with tipped-back hats and lit cigars emerge from sunken entrances; they pause to thumb their belts and ascertain the angle of the sun. A corner door beneath a neon sign swings open and all that's visible inside is darkness, a bit of apron, and a glowing cigarette.

A copy artist's film noir: on the outside, all light and shadow; once past the bar door—into the darkness?—a psychic neutrality with one cheap prop in a trick suit and a cast of anonymous actors. There's the bartender hero (fastidious, easygoing, sharp); his also heroic bartender father (sentimental, no-nonsense, hard-drinking); their wives (both plucky, self-sacrificing); the bartender's Old World aunt (attentive, displaced); their customers (known by their orders); the extras (modest to invisibility, like George Ditzel, who twenty-seven pages from the end still needs to be identified as "the George of George & Eddie's").

The book is meant to be an homage to the soul of the old East Side. Klinkenborg catalogues its citizens by occupation, from dressmaker to steamfitter, foundryman to church keeper; and even by name, eight lines of lyrical consonant combinations, with a few Germans thrown in to break up the meter. But even in homage—in fact, because of it—the people are lost, the center becomes the periphery. As romanticist, Klinkenborg is the medium through which the working class can be seen, and the picture he draws—an emotional yet guarded people, brightly striving but always just a bit behind the eight ball of life—is stylized in a way coincident with accepted notions.

This function of the cultural interpreter as cultural cop is in some ways inevitable, but it does overtime when workers are the subject. When Michael Moore's *Roger & Me* was getting a shellacking from the likes of Pauline Kael in *The New Yorker*—"a piece of gonzo demagoguery that made me feel cheap for laughing"—I remember thinking that Moore's sin had been to present the working class as a variegation of people, neither Socialist Realist models nor breadline pitifuls. I first saw the movie in unedited clips at a *Labor Notes* conference; none of the auto workers and mail handlers and teamsters who saw it with me felt cheap for laughing.

You can laugh at your equal, in the same way that you can take his opinions seriously. Michael Frisch, who teaches American studies at SUNY Buffalo, tells a good story in his book *A Shared Authority* (SUNY Press) about an experience he had in 1975 with *The New York Times Magazine* over the editing of an oral documentary on Buffalo's unemployed. The editors were eager for the outcry of people who were furious or disconsolate—"Can't you give us more stuff where, you know, they say how the system's fucking them over?" they asked—but when the time came for cuts, the passages chosen were those in which the speakers became reflective or analytical about the economic forces that had caused their predicament, an encroachment on territory reserved for the explaining classes.

Klinkenborg's people are mute, and their silence accomplishes one end of romanticism: the annulment of history.

While reading Klinkenborg's book I kept thinking of the photographs of Milton Rogovin, and of what a comparison between the two works told about the role of the artist and the task of presentation versus self-presentation. From 1977 to 1980 Rogovin photographed Buffalo's working people: two shots of each subject, one at work and one at home. (These are collected in *The Forgotten Ones*, available from Buffalo's Albright-Knox Art Gallery.) They are marvelously evocative pictures, chiefly because Rogovin asks his subjects to compose their own portraits. A steelworker may look saucy and conquering on the job; matronly and just a little anxious at home with her kids. An odd-job man may express nonchalance, even a touch of scorn, in the plant; while, seated before a tableau of religious icons, commercial calendars and his own "work" photo, a curious mix of defensiveness and melancholy. You can't type these people, because each time you return to them, they may disclose a new story.

But Klinkenborg's people are mute, and their silence accomplishes that other end of romanticism: the annulment of history. Midway in the book Klinkenborg does something that makes you think that, overwriting excepted, maybe you've been wrong, maybe that litany of job titles is about to quicken:

> It dawns on you (who thought you knew your father's utmost labors) that all these bricks—these miles and miles and miles of layered courses interlocked and mortared into gables, ledges, smokestacks, walls, and window arches, filigrees of ornament where in the mason's highly structured jazz a brick is turned or set up vertically or sloped into a herringbone, each brick a variation on the character of umber, now black, now almost orange—it dawns on you that all these bricks were laid by hand. It dizzies, for it opens up a nearly infinite regression. The bricks were laid by hand and manufactured by machine, but how were the machines made? And who made the machines that made the matter from which machines were made? And then who manufactured those machines?

And just on the cusp of breakthrough:

> If you push the question far enough, you come at last upon a solitary figure sitting on a beach at night and pounding rocks together in a driftwood fire. The farther down these streets you go, the nearer seems some fundamental moment, some elemental scene, the place where steel dissolves into its raw materials. You glimpse a city built of furnaces whose stoking is the work of railway mounted gantries, booms, and hoppers, its fuel heaped in mounds beside them.

Thus is industry personalized at the expense of labor. Klinkenborg is alien to the reverse process, which is more provocative and better entertainment as well. Here's how a former steel-mill rigger described her work to Michael Frisch, now collaborating with Rogovin on an oral/pictorial history project:

> Riggers were supposed to all know how to splice, that was part of the job description. . . . The mills ran on a cable, O.K., it turned everything. Now you take a cable, and you got to marry the two ends together. Well, you have to weave 'em all in, and that's what a splicer did, and it was hard work, and your hands were like this—[indicates gnarled hands]—you know, long before their time. It was a hard, hard job. I wanted to learn it for the *knowledge*, in

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case I ever needed it. I learned how to splice slings, chokers or whatever. And I always, I always try to make sure that I do it the best I could, because—the lift might be over my head [laughs] with them things holding it.

. . . you know where the original riggers were? They were the slaves of the Pharaohs, that's what they believe! Because, how else could they get those mighty stones and things. They figure that they had to put your large slabs on rollers, almost like pipe, or even if it was a tree, just to move it up. They had people pulling on it, and people pushing on it, and then other people taking those and moving them around to the front—it's all a form of rigging.

For Klinkenborg human agency pales beside myth, the solitary figure pounding rocks on a beach. So much easier, then, for him to construe a stinted history of working-class Buffalo, one that includes "spontaneous displays of patriotism" in World War I but not the methodical propaganda campaign that sent policemen to secure Liberty Bond pledges from every household in the city; that throws out the welcome mat to Eastern Europeans but does not mention the matter of exploitability or invasive "Americanization" efforts. What, for instance, did Thomas Wenzek, Eddie's father, make of those efforts, about which the Socialist steelworker and editor Charles Ellis wrote:

> Is it not time to quit talking about "Americanizing the alien" when we do not permit him even to form a labor union; when armed guards with machine guns surround his meeting places; when he may not even get together to discuss conditions under which he lives without being shot or arrested on a fake false charge and thrown in prison? Who the hell owns this earth, anyway?

And what did customers at the old Thomas Wenzek Restaurant make of Prohibition's intent to crimp immigrant social life? or of the anti-Catholic, anti-immigrant predations of the Ku Klux Klan? or of the huge steel strike of 1919 which claimed a Pole as its first victim? or of the Palmer raids which were more brutal in Buffalo than in any city in the country?

When it comes to 1947, Klinkenborg nervously mentions the wave of strikes that left "everyone with a sense of how precarious domestic wartime unity really was and how little selflessness there is to spare." Everyone? Do strikers fit within this totality of opinion? Because he has expunged every trace of conflict from

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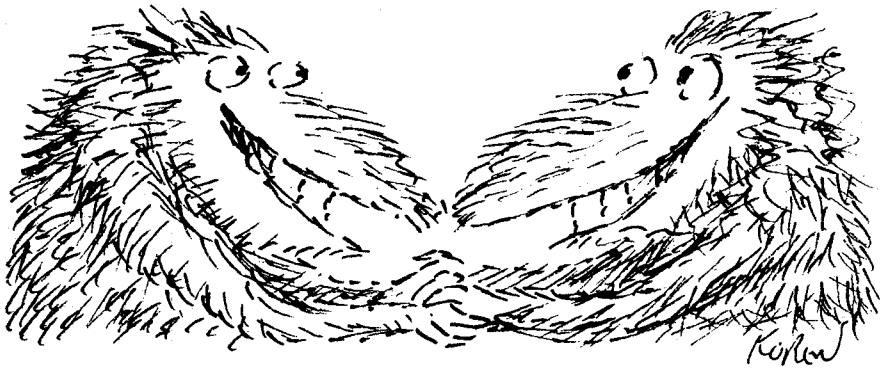

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the city's past, when later Klinkenborg speaks of "an innocent population" living "at the very last moment when life on earth was still normal," it is possible to think that here was that singular place where, except in extraordinary circumstances, class deferred to community and the slogan "City of Good Neighbors" accurately reflected reality.

But his historical excisions have a more insidious effect, for by denying the "white ethnic" working class its past conflicts Klinkenborg cannot but exaggerate the black riots that flamed in the streets of the East Side in the summer of 1967. This is not to say that those weren't frightening, not least to Eddie Wenzek, who sat behind his darkened bar with a rifle. But Klinkenborg aspires to transcend family history, and the picture of black kids breaking windows with bricks and being put down by police sticks and gunfire would have a different aspect if set within a continuum of clashes involving society's exploited ones, for instance the streetcar workers' strike of 1913, when women took bricks in their handbags to the picket line and hurled them at scabs, a strike violently quenched by the National Guard. Or the riot of 1863 upon the imposition of a draft, when mostly Irish dockworkers rampaged through the black enclave on the East Side and left one man dead.

I don't remember the '67 riots so well; only their prelude and aftermath. All the speculation about a long hot summer, and all the endless commentary about falling property values. What had been happening in Buffalo since the decade began was not unique: realtors preying on white fear and racial animus to scare homeowners into selling low; meanwhile, urging blacks to buy high for the benefit of a "stable neighborhood," and block by block busting communities while pocketing the difference. At the same time "urban renewal" and highway construction had ravaged coherent black and white middle- and working-class sections of the East Side. My father still curses the expressway that plunges like a concrete gash through a part of town where once had stood continuous archways of trees, hundreds of them, in the most graceful stretch of public space I have ever seen.

This, however, should not obscure the fact that many of those who fled the old Polish neighborhoods for the suburbs were terrible racists, astonishing in their ignorance and provincialism. ("Don't you think, Jon," an uncle of mine in Cheektowaga once said to me, "don't you think they should just move all those blacks out of New York City and put them in the middle of the country where there's lots of room?") Without faceted characters, Klinkenborg need not accommodate this ugly truth. The people who keep coming to George & Eddie's for fish fry even after they've moved out of the city have all simply made a life-style choice. All good people.

And Eddie? If there is a dark side to Eddie it is hidden. Charitably, I would say that Klinkenborg wrote this book out of love for his father-in-law, and the same reason I was glad not to know the real views of my relatives who baited me about politics may have impelled Klinkenborg to walk only on the safe side of history's street. The result, though, is that Eddie—and by extension Buffalo—serves simply as a prop for Klinkenborg's writing, and once the bar is sold and Eddie moves out to the suburbs it is as if he has no meaning except in tragedy. Klinkenborg has got his story. □

Generation Gaffe

PAGAN KENNEDY

AMERICAN PSYCHO. *By Bret Easton Ellis. Vintage. 399 pp. $11.*

Early last December, when *The New York Times* deemed Bret Easton Ellis a suitable spokesman for young adults, he wrote an article about his—my—generation for the Arts & Leisure section. As in his novel *Less Than Zero*, he did his best to confirm suspicions that our brat pack is as anesthetized to violence as Angelenos are to smog. Of course, the article said a world more about Ellis, who claimed: "The comedy that audiences respond to wholeheartedly is in blockbuster crash-and-burn epics and horror films, usually after a body has been bloodily dispatched and the hero or villain (twenty-something audiences often root for both) gives us a knowing wink by capping off the slaughter with an ironic fillip."

Thus, with Freddie Kruger fixed in his head as America's greatest comic, Ellis serves up 399 pages of winks and fillips in his new novel, *American Psycho*, about a Wall Streeter who kills people instead of companies. But a funny thing happened on the way to the printer: Not everyone proved to have such a refined sense of humor, and the book was flayed in the press as roundly as Ellis has chosen to flay some of his female characters.

For those who might have been sheltered from the media storm, the story is this: In mid-November, Simon & Schuster chair Richard Snyder canceled the book, which had been readied for release in January, saying there had been an "incorrect decision" in acquiring it. (This followed protests from staff members and ridicule in *Time* and *Spy* magazines; Snyder denied subsequent rumors that his hatchet had been wielded at the behest of Martin Davis, chair of Paramount Communications, which not only owns Simon & Schuster but has to protect a reputation that includes such *cinéma vérité* as *Friday the 13th*.) Ellis was free to keep his $300,000 advance, and within two days it was announced that Sonny Mehta had acquired the book for Vintage Contemporaries, part of Random House. From that time on, *Psycho* took more hits than Rasputin while staggering toward its March 15 publication date.

Bad blood spilled everywhere. Novelist Lorrie Moore named Ellis and David Lynch the twin peaks of a new pornography. Robert Massie, then president of the Authors Guild, chided Simon & Schuster for breach of contract. The PEN American Center stuck up for "a broad range of ideas no matter how deplorable." *Publishers Weekly*, caught in a divided trade, tried to equivocate but found "the book does transcend the boundaries of what is acceptable in mainstream publishing." Peg Yorkin, a board member of the A.C.L.U. Foundation of Southern California, cautioned that women "are allowing the First Amendment to affect their better judgment" and "If this is acceptable what's the next step?" *The Washington Post*'s Jonathan Yardley dubbed *Psycho* "exploitive, sensationalistic junk." Norman Mailer took a stab at determining Is It Art? in the March *Vanity Fair*, Phoebe Hoban held forth in *New York* and Roger Rosenblatt trashed the novel in *The New York Times Book Review*. (The astonishing thing about most of this commentary is that it was based on Ellis's *manuscript*—not much more sporting treatment than the serial killer himself gives.) Ellis reported he was "totally shocked" by the reactions.

Pagan Kennedy writes frequently for the Voice Literary Supplement.

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Some criticism went beyond the pale: Ellis is eschewing the customary book tour after receiving anonymous death threats, making this author-recluse at least temporarily a sort of wee-generation Salman Rushdie. And while *Psycho* itself began to make public appearances around the nation, it did so without the publisher's usual fanfare of ads. Mehta called Vintage's hush-hush approach "dignified," but of course advertising would be redundant after the media melee.

Perhaps the most notable attack was launched by the Los Angeles chapter of the National Organization for Women, which has organized a boycott of Random House books—feminist works excepted—through the end of 1991 or until the publisher drops the book from its list. L.A. chapter president Tammy Bruce, who has been reading bits of the book over the phone to callers (213-657-8436), says it "will invariably contribute to violence against women" and accuses Random House of taking the torture and dismemberment of women and "moving it into Americana." Calling the novel "the most misogynistic communication we've ever come across," she wonders aloud, "How did this happen in the first place?"

Before answering Bruce's question, we should note that simply to give *American Psycho* yet another bad review here would be to beat a dead horse—or, more in the spirit, to gouge its eyes out, nail its legs to the floor and crack the bones, then compare its eviscerated guts to the kiwi soufflé at Odeon. The book is as ridiculous in its excesses as the horror movies it purports to emulate. There's no question it's abysmally written; the real question, though, is why critics take this stock horror schlock so seriously. *Newsweek*'s Peter Plagens said *American Psycho* must stand accused "of being not only mediocre, but base, misogynous and dangerous." Rosenblatt, for the *Times*, found it guilty of "gratuitous degradation of human life." Aging bad boy Norman Mailer made a case for his younger counterpart in *Vanity Fair*: "The writer may have enough talent to be taken seriously. How one wishes he were without talent." Does one? Mailer also credits Ellis with setting out to "shock the unshockable." But Ellis's professed surprise at the public uproar and Hey-it-was-supposed-to-be-funny statements to the press, if not disingenuous, cast doubt on Mailer's thesis.

Better to ask Tammy Bruce's question, How did this happen in the first place? Or rather, How did a writer with poor judgment and questionable skill ever come to command carte blanche?

The answer, overlooked by the press in its rush to beat on Ellis, to titillate with the rat-up-the-vagina passage, the nail-gunning, the sodomizing-the-severed-head scene, to have a "censorship" and "violence in art" debate, is that members of the very same literary and critical establishment now struggling so hard to disown Ellis are the ones who anointed him the new F. Scott Fitzgerald a half-dozen years ago.

When Ellis's first novel, *Less Than Zero*, appeared in 1985, he was a publicist's dream. At 20, he was eminently photogenic in a rumpled suit, could describe trendy restaurants and vices, and seemed to have a line on Kids Today. He depicted spoiled L.A. teens who live up to adults' nightmares perfectly: Shallow, beautiful, drug-addled, vicious, they ultimately forgo video games to cut off a girl's breasts and stick candles in the holes. The book, about as deep as ad copy, offers pseudo-profundities to explain the kids' hunger for coke and blood. "People are afraid to merge on freeways in Los Angeles," murmur the characters. "Disappear Here," blares a billboard. The book was greeted with grudging critical acclaim: After all, the youngster wrote violent scenes well, and it was taken for granted that he understood the kid thing. And the kid thing was very, very hot.

Ellis had ridden in on the wave of "yuppie lit" in the bizarre publishing climate of the mid '80s, when the literary world shook off its musty standards to go club hopping, name dropping and power shopping. Such writers as Ellis, Tama Janowitz and Jay McInerney offered those creeping up on middle age a slick, glamorized version of what it was to be a 20-year-old.

And critics bought it. "Expertly, Ellis captures the banality in the speech of his teenagers," said John Rechy in the *Los Angeles Times Book Review*. Michiko Kakutani of *The New York Times* also believed Ellis's story, saying, "It possesses an unnerving air of documentary reality." The less one was willing to think of kids, it would seem, the more one thought of Ellis. And so, acting as a conduit for the approbation of adults, he became a sort of generational Oreo.

But Ellis's next novel, *The Rules of Attraction*, sank like a stone, or a stoned 20-year-old millionaire. The book is tame for him: It follows a bunch of college kids hopping in and out of bed with one another but lacks the violence and designer labels of *Less Than Zero* as well as its reporting-on-a-scene trendiness. It may have seemed then that we'd heard the last from Ellis, who would soon be over 25 anyway. (Meanwhile, other writers who'd been propelled to fame in the yuppie lit craze also bombed in follow-up books: Janowitz with *A Cannibal in Manhattan* and McInerney with *Ransom*.)

Ellis, however, learned the lesson of his failed book and went back to the formula that had made him famous. At least, that's the only explanation I can find for why anyone would write *American Psycho*, which must have been almost as tedious in the execution as it is to read.

You want violence? *Less Than Zero*'s narrator, witnessing friends raping a 12-year-old who's been shot up with heroin, mumbles "I don't think it's right" but doesn't stop them. *American Psycho*'s Patrick Bateman revels in slicing up people like companies after an L.B.O.; if he suffers a twinge of regret, it's only that blood might spatter his Burberry. You want Lifestyles of the Rich and Heinous? How about a numbing invocation of designer names, eateries, personal care products: In *Less Than Zero*, we can vicariously shop at Neiman-Marcus, Camp Beverly Hills or Privilege, and ride in a BMW, Cadillac convertible, Mercedes or Porsche. *American Psycho* takes us a step further, making us shop till we drop: "Hamlin is wearing a suit by Lubiam . . . a silk tie by Resikeio and a belt from Ralph Lauren. Reeves is wearing a six-button double-breasted suit by Christian Dior." (Characters between books apparently belong to the same old-boy network of nihilists as well, for *Less Than Zero*'s narrator attends college with Sean Bateman in *The Rules of Attraction*; Sean's older brother is the cut-up in *American Psycho*. Yoknapatawpha this isn't, but Ellis's books mark a territory and can't be considered in isolation.)

In short, *American Psycho* is *Less Than Zero reductio ad absurdum*, so why was one called "documentary" and "fascinating" but the other condemned as "the most misogynistic communication" we've seen and "exploitive junk"? If Ellis's murderer had been a drugged-out teen instead of a broker, would the violence have been "gratuitous" or there for verisimilitude? Sure, there's a difference in degree: *Less Than Zero* offers violence as hors d'oeuvres while *American Psycho* ladles it out as the entree. And even this might have had its voyeur read-

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ership at the height of yuppie lit, but now that we've OD'd on Donald Trump, sushi and power ties, nobody will be wowed by the psycho's platinum American Express card.

Still, Ellis pulls out all the stops. He goes so far as to borrow some Bolivian Marching Powder (see McInerney's *Bright Lights, Big City*) and an art-type named Stash (see Janowitz's *Slaves of New York*) from his confreres. One might even find the gory leitmotif of *American Psycho* presaged in Janowitz's *American Dad*, which includes murder by postage meter and chain-saw bloodletting.

If Ellis came too late to milk the yuppie fad, he also misjudged the demographics of his audience. Since *Less Than Zero*, he's been under the delusion that his readers are his own age; after the publication of that book, he said he was hoping to appeal to "young people—people who normally wouldn't read." Maybe he has, and maybe they haven't.

Norman Mailer, in his look at the naked and the dead left by Ellis, said *American Psycho* flops because of Ellis's failure of imagination. The violence is secondhand, stolen from slasher films: "We are being given horror-shop plastic," Mailer complained. But I believe Ellis *meant* to give us the plastic, intended the violence to be funny, stylized, hip (hardly a thought that originated with him). Bateman connives to get a victim to stand over newspapers to spare a white oak floor, for instance—the sort of thing common in this attempt at a 400-page blood-and-Gucci joke. Yet few reviewers have bothered to quote from the less sensational parts of the book, to show Ellis at his weakest, when he isn't using corpses or fashion to dress up his prose. Here's a moment from the end of the book, when Bateman supposedly comes to understand himself: "I saw a desert landscape that was unending, resembling some sort of crater, so devoid of reason and light and spirit that the mind could not grasp it on any sort of conscious level and if you came close the mind would reel backward." And backward runs the mind as reel such sentences.

By lauding Bret Easton Ellis for *Less Than Zero*, the literary establishment provided the jolt of electricity that brought a Frankenstein monster of a book to life. And just as in the horror flicks, the mob, armed with pitchforks and torches, is chasing down the beast—and its presumed alter ego, Ellis—rather than its true creator. □

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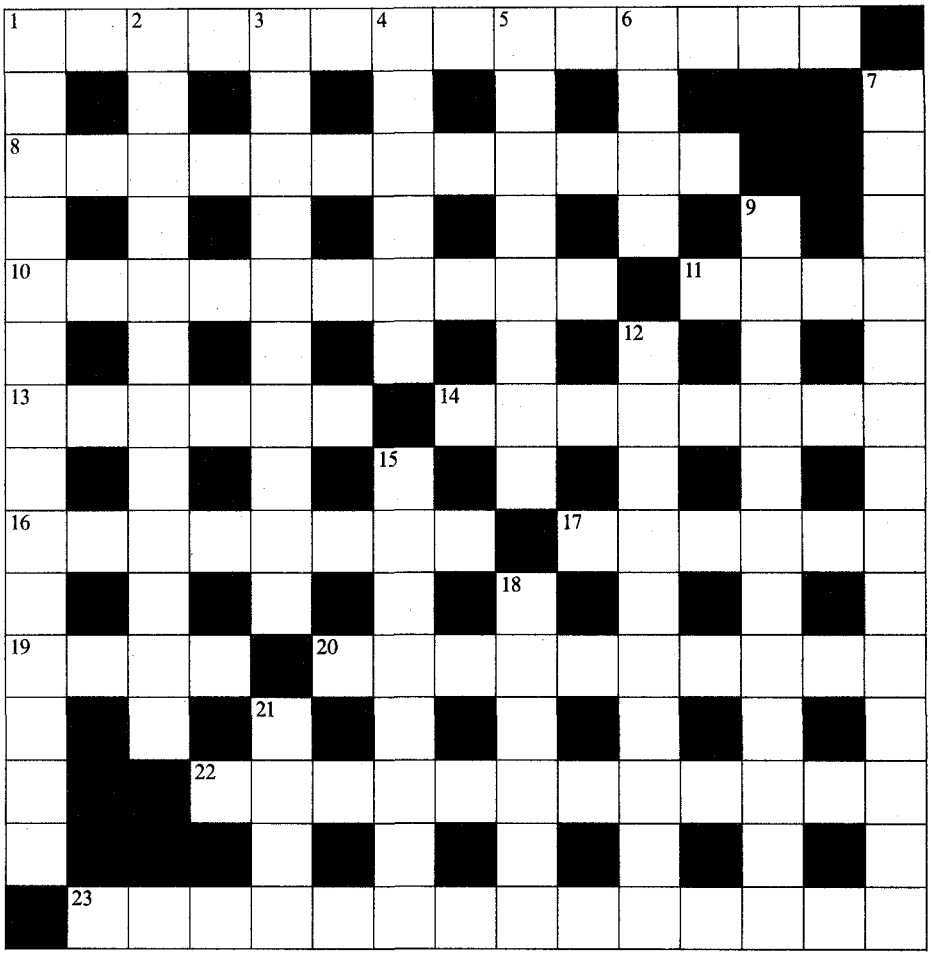
B	A	D	E	G	G		E	S	C	U	L	E	N	T
			I				V				A			
M	A	S	S	A	C	R	E		R	E	G	I	M	E
	G				O		L		A		N		E	
P	E	A	S	O	U	P		A	D	D	I	C	T	S
	N		W		N		B		I		A		E	
A	D	V	E	N	T		E	S	C	A	P	E	R	S
	A		E		E		S		A		P		S	
		S	T	O	R	Y	T	E	L	L	E	R		

Crossword Puzzle No. 2330

FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS

1 Tune that takes getting used to? (You might push a button to get it while riding.) (3-11)
8 What the stamp of events does. (12)
10 and 11 The minority in the House might need more than one to get action when behaving in a "voice of the people" way. (14)
13 Arrived, as the station might put it, in the present with not much room from side to side. (6)
14 What the feather in his cap was called? (One was an old-fashioned dude!) (8)
16 What Betty Grable got in WWII? (Perhaps only temporarily put together if you are.) (6,2)
17 What the soldier did several times a day and fouled things up? (6)
19 Didn't tell the truth about what Schubert wrote? (4)
20 Certainly not a standing invitation! (4.1.5)
22 If found in calmness, I'd be assuming a false appearance. (12)
23 An empty wagon having a narrow top sounds all right, but goes off safely. (5,9)

DOWN

1 One's should be not to have any! (One's expenses in the fall might be taken care of.) (8,6)
2 Of which Proust's was one of the past? (12)
3 Certainly not rarely done. (10)
4 His best known work was probably not Old World. (6)
5 In a lamentable manner, perhaps 12 comes up with a soldier and Mr. Coolidge. (8)
6 Might be either good or bad or nothing, to certain people. (4)
7 She might be associated with a fan of the theater, being a woman who keeps the old clock running just! (4,10)
9 Doesn't bail do this, perhaps? (The scene of the murder might be.) (5-7)
12 Aqua, logically—or perhaps marine blue. (5,5)
15 A period of the Mesozoic epoch seemingly coming from the mountains thus. (8)
18 Such as a pipe cleaner is more American, in part. (6)
21 A 6, perhaps as you might the letter. (4)

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Yet the U S. continually helps Israel defy similar Security Council resolutions?

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